

LANGAA | AFRICAN STUDIES CENTRE, LEIDEN

# **“We Get Nothing from Fishing”**

*Fishing for Boat Opportunities Amongst  
Senegalese Fisher Migrants*



Henrietta Mambo Nyamnjoh

VISIT...

LANZAROTE  
*Caliente*.COM

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Langaa &  
African Studies Centre

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## Chapter One

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### Themes and methodology of the project

#### Introduction

“Today a new boatload of 102 Africans desperately fleeing poverty has arrived in the Canary Islands looking tired and some sick and unable to walk” (BBC News, 26 May 2007).

Baba met me at the bus stop and took me to meet Sall.<sup>1</sup> We followed a sandy path for about ten minutes and turned into an alleyway with buildings on both sides. There was Sall sitting on the veranda having his breakfast, which consisted of half a loaf of bread and a cup of tea. I introduced myself as a student researching migration. He smiled and asked me what I wanted to know and I told him briefly about the focus of my research. Then out of the blue he asked me to have a close look at him. “A man of my age (34) eating half a loaf of bread without spread and with just a small cup of tea that barely has any milk in it. No, this is not right, you know. I have been to Spain four times and all four times I have been sent back. I want to go because life is difficult here. For two weeks now I have not been paid, I am not married because I need to earn enough money to be able to look after my wife and family like a man. But here I earn just enough to look after myself. I cannot help anybody. But I was hoping to migrate to have a better life for myself and also to be able to get married. I have not given up; one day I will be in Europe, God willing.”

Sall is 34 years old and, as he said, a repatriated migrant. He is a tall, slim man who looks much older than his real age. He is (was) a fisherman. He has a bad stammer and what few teeth he has left are very poor, broken, discoloured teeth. He is ill-tempered and authoritarian but can also be gentle. Ever since he was repatriated in 2007, he has categorically refused to return to fishing, which he says is unprofitable, but he has no other means of subsistence. He does not come from a family of fishers. His father was a medical doctor and Sall was at school until he lost his parents at an early age and none of his brothers or sisters could pay for his education. He was forced to drop out of school at the age of fourteen and go into

fishing to earn a living. Sall would be able to eat well if his employer paid his salary regularly, but as the employer is the son of a parliamentarian, those working for him feel that complaining is useless as no action will be taken against him.

Sall's story is representative of those told by repatriated migrants and the families of those who made it to Spain. All they wanted was a better standard of living and migration became a family strategy to improve their standard of living. Migration is not only seen as a strategy but has come to be acceptable in this community as a means of improving one's social status. Saliently too, it has become a sort of macho culture where going across the sea is highly respected by those who do it as a manly pursuit. To a certain extent also, it is a revolt against the government for doing so little to improve their livelihood, and against certain customs whereby independence and autonomy are achieved only when a father passes away.<sup>2</sup> While acknowledging the lack of economic power of most migrants, I observed, having spent time with them, that their situation is not as desperate as the media often depicts it. Migration has long been seen as a way of life in West African culture, especially in Senegalese society where migrants occupy a higher social status. It satisfies a cultural prerequisite as migration is still deeply rooted in Senegalese culture and is part and parcel of the lives of the people. It is seen as a mark of status and a *rite de passage* (rite of passage) but is also espoused in specific historical conditions that define a particular social and economic context. Values associated with migration have become part of the Senegalese community's values (Arthur, 1991; Ba, 2007). Timera (2001: 40) explains the "religious vision which defines migration as a 'cultural trait', a practice integrated into a value system and a specific way of life"<sup>3</sup> and adds: "this tradition of travel which serves as an initiation rite"<sup>4</sup>. Acknowledging this, De Bruijn (2007: 110) reminds us that "mobilities and travelling culture are of old histories and of the new Sahelian world" and maintains that migration is "engrained in the history, daily life and experiences of people and is fundamental to any understanding of African society" (De Bruijn *et al.* 2001: 1). Boat migration in this study is thus understood as continuity of the longstanding culture of migration. First and foremost, migration among the fishing community is a tradition that marks the beginning of manhood and

generates respect from peers and pride from family, while within society as a whole it is a sign of coming of age and thus performing the rite of passage, which also earns the respect and admiration of family and peers. Rather than focus exclusively on change, as suggested by Klute & Hahn (2007), I propose combining change and continuity. Change in the sense that the form of migration has evolved from seasonal to permanent and into boat migration and continuity because migration is seen as an age-old tradition. Migration thus becomes a means of elevating one's social status and, according to Reichert (1982), those who do not go through this process are considered to be lazy. For his part, Ali (2007) views it as a sub-culture of non-migration. While this is true in most cases, even in Senegal, those who refuse to be part of boat migration are not considered as such because migration is a family decision and quite often the decision whether to migrate rests with the family, given that they bear the brunt of providing the funding.

The 'culture of migration', which is the core of this thesis, is quite apt in the understanding of the whole notion behind boat migration. In this framework, Cohen (2004) has eloquently argued that "migration is fuelled by locally defined valuations of lifecycles and patterns of preferential strategies". (See also Massey et al, 1994) Taking the debate a step further, Klute & Hahn (2007: 14), while acknowledging Cohen's (2004) point of view, contend that:

[C]ultures of migration are established by discourses, and sometimes even conflicting negotiations, negotiations among migrants themselves and between them and other groups of actors...: people who stay back home, people migrants encounter in transitory places, or those they deal with in their respective host societies.

Although this point of view is shared, this thesis goes on to amalgamate the points of view of Cohen (Ibid.) and Klute & Hahn (Ibid.). Evidence from my empirical findings points to this claim. Being a migrant (*modou-modou* or *boal-boal*)<sup>5</sup> in Senegal is much hailed; the family is highly regarded, and even distant relatives enjoy the spoils when a migrant returns home to visit. The value attached to migration is buttressed by the various discourses and attitudes of migrants who return on vacation and those who aspire to migrate.

Inextricably linked to these cultures of migration is the notion of religion and *maraboutage*. For the vast majority of the population, good contact with a *marabout* is an integral component of their life and such relationships are carefully cultivated. Boat migration has had its bearing on the growing appeal of reformist Islamic ideology arising from the contestation about whether boat migration should be judged as suicide or martyrdom. The many *marabouts* who regarded it as martyrdom paved the way for the large numbers of migrants prepared to attain martyrdom by undertaking the journey, given the extent to which this is grounded in Islam. It is believed that anyone who drowns on the way will become a martyr because he has sacrificed his life in an attempt to improve his family's living standards. As such, a well-entrenched system of bilateral relations between the religious *marabout* and a well-organized religious society has provided a way for migration to thrive. As argued by Momar Coumba-Diop & Mamadou Diouf (1980: 80), disenchantment among the youth began back in the 1990s, with "urban youth [going] in the search of a framework for social and political contestation". They state that this disenchantment provided an opening for religious entrepreneurs interested in capturing this clientele by providing an alternative framework for political contestation. This assertion is quite telling about the role of the *marabouts* regarding boat migration and given how much profit they have made from migrants. Migrants and conveyors, who would not board a boat or prepare one without the approval of and the offering of sacrifices directed by a *marabout*, see the position of the *marabout* as divine intervention in the journey. And failure to consult one often ends in an unsuccessful attempt to arrive at their destination or in the *marabout* alleging it is thanks to his mystical intervention that they were able to return safely to land despite disaster at sea.

Given that migration operates within a dynamic culture of migration and that people that make up this culture, the important role played by family and friends in the network of migrants is undeniable. These networks are the social capital that the migrants draw on and are pivotal in the decision to migrate, as they help provide the funding to cover the journey. In this light, Castles & Miller (2003: 21) hold that migration is hardly ever a simple individual action in which a person decides to move in search of better life chances. Migration is a collective action: it arises out of



social change and affects the whole society. Boat migration thrives on networking: networks of migrants, families and organizers, as well as networks of settled migrants in the country of destination. The new economies of labour migration emphasize the importance of family strategies designed to obtain secure employment and investment capital and manage risk over long periods of time (Castles, 2007; Stark, 1991; Taylor, 1978).

The notion of social capital was first introduced by Glen Loury (1971) but Bourdieu (1986) pointed out its broader relevance to society. According to Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992: 119, cited in Massey *et al.* 1998: 42; Field, 2003: 15), “social capital is the sum of the resources actual or virtual that accrues to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”. They note that as a result of its convertibility, it can be translated into other forms of capital, permitting people to gain access to social capital (henceforth SC) through networks. Bourdieu conceives capital as social power and a resource for the rich to enhance their position and status in society, whereas Putnam (1999) considers SC as bridging and bonding diverse people together, which includes features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. According to Coleman (1995), SC was not limited only to the powerful but could also convey real benefits to the poor and to marginalized communities. Unlike Bourdieu, I do not view SC as a tool for the powerful only to assert themselves in society or to enhance social status within a social structure. Instead, I share similar concerns with Putnam (Ibid.) and Coleman (Ibid.) that SC represents a resource that can be drawn on by both the rich and the poor to pursue their interests, and it underscores the importance of community-oriented goals, which are not always exclusively reducible to the search for economic gain. Networking amongst migrants is done consciously and subconsciously by choosing how they engage in activities with fellow immigrants. These networks are structured by mutual obligation and embedded in complex systems of loyalty. Trust is by and large the nerve of any social institution and thus generates SC. It is the most treasured SC in boat migration. Apart from the huge number of networks that would-be migrants make use of, trust is the engine that fuels this

capital; and without it, the process of migration would stall. I contend that the ability of boat migration to thrive continuously is largely as a result of its ability to produce and reproduce SC among would-be migrants, repatriated migrants, as well as successful migrants and their families.

As much as migration is a family matter, the decision to migrate is also underpinned by notions of machismo and revolt. Migrants have redefined machismo to represent those who are able to make the boat journey to the Canary Islands; a break from the pervasive stereotypical notions of masculinity that depicts a forceful, strong man who is the head of the family. Redefining machismo proves that there is more to masculinity than a long-held stereotype. A similar redefinition was researched by Gutmann (1996) in *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* where men in Mexico and Sosúa in the Dominican Republic respectively moved away from the stereotypically obvious meaning of machismo to talk about their daily lives, parenthood, child care and violence. Brennan's (2004) work focuses on the new meanings of masculinity that have emerged alongside women's earning capacity. Sex workers must temper their displays of monetary gains so as to not compromise their reputation as mothers and, in this sexual economy, men can flaunt their unemployment and be seen to be completely dependent on their wives/partners financially. Their laziness and/or dependency are recast as signs of being macho. Although this concept is not directed towards Senegalese migrants, the notion of machismo is shifting in Senegal, and boat migration has come to be highly acclaimed as a sign of machismo, departing from the notion of the domineering man who is the head of the family. A man has to prove his worth by successfully migrating. Failure can cause migrants to incur disapproval, and has even resulted in divorce.

Those who are actively engaged in migration sometimes see it as a protest movement against socio-political policies in which migrants feel socially marginalized in a society where political decisions do not seem to take their presence into account.

This research was motivated by the media and scholarly attention that has been devoted to boat migration. Most of the existing literature has dwelt on the economic reasons for migration (see Ba, 2007; Mbow, 2007; Schmitz, 2008; Sall & Morand, 2008). This research goes beyond the economic discourse to incorporate socio-

cultural as well as political factors in an attempt to find out why this migration has reached such unprecedented levels. Focusing on the economic aspects means that the existing literature has tended to concentrate on the push-and-pull factors to understand the widespread nature of the phenomenon. As suggested by Klute & Hahn (2007), such “analysis tends to favour normative perspectives”. Although these concepts help us to understand movements from A to B, they do not adequately capture what happens between A and B, and do not give a comprehensive 3D explanation.

From my experience of living in Senegal and coming into contact with a woman who became a female activist as a result of losing her only son on a treacherous boat journey, I felt I needed to find out more about the reasons for boat migration beyond the obvious one, namely poverty. Why is this mass exodus occurring? Why do parents, like this woman, encourage their sons to undertake such journeys? From a brief conversation with her, I realized that it is a deeply held faith that migration will lead to a better life elsewhere. This extensive, multi-sited,<sup>6</sup> qualitative and ethnographic research thus sets out to capture the underlying happenings betwixt and between that, when put together, will help us to understand the phenomenon of boat migration. These empirical data will not only contribute to our understanding of the evolution in migration and its unprecedented levels, but will also help to develop new theories that could explain this phenomenon.

Initially, the working assumption of this research was that ICT and social networks are a central feature in the organization of boat migration. Earlier on in my research, I realized there was more to it than ICT and social networks alone. Refocusing on new insights in the field, I decided on multi-sited research in Senegal in the different villages that serve as points of departure, to follow the people in the different communities in Senegal and to focus more on the fishing community in these areas for the following reasons. First, they were not only central in organizing the journey to Europe but also make up most of the occupants of the boats. Secondly, by the time I got to the field, boat migration had been criminalized by the government and the rate of sea patrols had been increased. This made it difficult to trace people, as they were apprehensive about talking and feared

arrest. Turning to the points of departure, I had hoped to talk to fishermen who had come back to their communities. Thirdly, there was much talk of illegal migration and of the youths being the main actors, but very little research had been carried out on the fishermen, their role in boat migration and why they played this dual role.

Lastly, although much has been written, very few studies have offered in-depth scientific accounts of the reasons advanced by those who contemplate and attempt this journey. Nor has there been a focus on a particular group of people. With evidence from empirical data, this research will give documentary accounts of would-be migrants and those who have attempted and failed to migrate, as well as family profiles and village analysis focusing on the migrants themselves, to shed light on this phenomenon.

Preference for a multi-sited approach is underpinned by the fact that it "traces within different settings complex cultural phenomena and follows the movements of a particular group of subjects", namely fishermen (Marcus, 1995). This research makes extensive use of this approach.

The significance of the research is twofold. Firstly, it sets out to illuminate the underlying reasons, other than economic, for migrating since no detailed study has yet been undertaken in this area. The reasons for migrating are inextricably linked to the migrants' perceptions and ideologies about Europe and migration. Secondly, the focus of this specific group of migrants has not been widely researched, and what has been done focused on the economic aspects and lack of resources (see Sall & Morand, 2008), bypassing the socio-cultural aspects that have led to their massive participation in boat migration. It is equally assumed that they are at the centre of this phenomenon, both as organizers and migrants. Studying this group will provide insight into why they are at the centre of boat migration, how this secretive activity is organized, and the complexities of the vagaries propelling migration.

This research hopes to contribute to a more refined understanding of the causes and reasons behind migration. It will also lead to new insights into the current socio-cultural linkages of migration. Equally, it will inform policies aimed at seeking solutions to this form of migration. Lastly, by this means, areas for future research will be suggested.

The existing literature (Fall (2006) and (2007); Mbow (2007); Ba (2007); Fall (2007) has tended to focus too narrowly on the obvious causes of migration-related poverty. Ba (2007) opines that boat migration is the result of poverty and neoliberal policies. By the same token, Mbow (2007) contends that it is an “economic jihad”. It is true that migration is a result of poverty, but poverty alone cannot explain this phenomenon given that it is part and parcel of the way of life of the people and a rite of passage for the community of fishermen under study. Contrary to these views, Ali (2007) holds that migration is a social process. Acknowledging this concept, I go further and point out that migration is a broad socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. Thus, looking at it from a strictly economic point of view only inhibits our understanding of the migration process and will obfuscate empirical data.

Boat migration can thus best be understood when studied from a socio-economic and cultural perspective, which this research attempts to show. In a similar vein, Brettel & Hollifield (2006) hold that economic factors cannot and do not fully predict population movement when they are divorced from the social and cultural context.

### **Research site and background**

We have been reminded by Sanjek that urban researchers must select “certain actors, activities, or locations as the anchor points for fieldwork” (1978: 257 in MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000: 17). This research basically follows these guidelines. As pointed out by Marcus (1995), ethnographic research requires following people, and in this respect I will introduce some of the informants and the different sites where they were encountered to situate them better. Focusing on boat migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands, particular attention was given to Guet Ndar-Saint Louis where extensive fieldwork was carried out in addition to other locations such as Kayar, M’bour, Thiaroy-sur-Mer and Yarakh. Saint Louis received more attention because in previous interviews all the informants had made reference to the Guet-Ndariens of Saint Louis, and provided contacts which proved useful in this fieldwork. This area has the highest number of repatriated migrants, and the group forms the bulk of the migrants from the fishing communities as well as repatriated migrants. Equally, there were a lot of conveyors.

## **Saint Louis**

Driving into Saint Louis, one's attention is attracted by the natural beauty of the landscape, with the road sandwiching the sea. The water, though shallow, serves as a fishing spot for less experienced minors. The beauty and tranquillity of this entrance is not reflected in the town of Saint Louis, where the visitor is faced with the reality of filth.

Saint Louis was founded by the French in 1659 and later became important as it was the capital of "West Africa" *L'Afrique Occidentale* during French colonial rule. From 1790 onwards, with the creation of the dockyard, it enjoyed a boom and became an important commercial centre. At the time, there was no bridge linking the two islands – *Ile Nord* and *Ile Sud* – to the rest of the town. With the construction of the Faidherbe Bridge in 1865, Saint Louis saw an increase in activity with the two parts of the town now linked. This was important during the colonial era, as it was the capital of *L'Afrique Occidentale* with the Governor General of Nouakchott and Senegal resident there, and it also had a French military base, school and health centre.

In short, Saint Louis was bustling with life due to the strategic role it played economically, politically and socially for the French and the rest of the *Afrique Occidentale* area that included Senegal, Mauritania and Guinea. Fishing was an important activity in the then very artisanal fishing community of Guet Ndar, which made its presence felt as a leader in this domain (Camara, 1968), a situation that has continued until today.

However, the good times only lasted as long as Saint Louis was the political and economic capital of *l'Afrique Occidentale* in the years leading up to the independence of Senegal and Mauritania. Towards the end of 1963, there was a gradual shift of activities from Saint Louis to Dakar and Nouakchott. Bonnardel (1992: 15) aptly described it as follows:

"... separated from Mauritania and relegated to the poorest area in the country, Saint Louis has, for the past thirty years, lived in exile... The town has witnessed no sea traffic since the end of 1963, no shipping lines traffic since 1971, the railway traffic between Saint Louis and Dakar is dwindling; colonial wholesale trade left the former capital in 1960 and the town no longer plays any role in providing supplies to Mauritania and plays only a minor role for the valley."<sup>7</sup>

Economic activities came to an abrupt halt and different sectors were affected, amongst them artisanal fishing. This concomitantly endangered livelihoods, the result of which was: “The former capital witnessed poverty, marginalization and people managing to make ends meet.”<sup>8</sup> (Ibid.: 13).



*Saint Louis – colonial bridge*

### **Guet Ndar**

Fishing in Saint Louis is practised by the Guet Ndariens – a name derived from the neighbourhood in which they live, Guet Ndar. It is not certain when this neighbourhood was set up, but “it probably existed before the birth of Saint Louis or at the same time.”<sup>9</sup> (Camara, 1968: 231). Prior to independence, Guet Ndar made its presence felt by positioning Saint Louis as the country’s main fishing centre. Fishing is the main occupation of the Guet Ndariens, and they have a mastery of the art (Camara, 1968: 161; Bonnardel, 1992: 226).

Situated on the west of *la langue de Barbarie*, Guet Ndar is about three kilometres long and is sandwiched by the ocean to the right and the river to the left, and the stretch of road goes past the Muslim cemetery to Hydrobase. On entering this neighbourhood, one’s

attention is immediately drawn to its population of young boys and men sitting in different age groups, women and girls running roadside restaurants (*tangana*), others doing laundry and the dishes, and others plaiting, while yet others are simply sitting idly enjoying the breeze. Children are visibly present on the street and look very untidy, like their mothers. Sheep/rams fight for space and food as they eat the leftovers from the pots in which family meals have been prepared. And lastly, it is difficult to miss the strong smell of filth, rotting food and the smell of the staple rice dish – *tcheboudjiene* – that envelopes this neighbourhood and gives it its distinct character. "They are and live in their own world, with a lot of filth,"<sup>10</sup> as Camara remarks (1968: 16) "On first contact, it seems old and linked to an outdated village belonging to the colonial past. The impression is more that of an incredibly filthy camp than an urban neighbourhood"<sup>11</sup>. Irrespective of our perceptions, the Guet Ndariens are less worried about this than about the depletion of the resources on which their livelihoods depend.

The only occupation of the current generation of fishers is fishing, unlike their predecessors who practised it alongside agriculture. Their daily activities are conditioned by fishing, and migration is a major component as they migrate seasonally along with the fish to where they will find a good catch. From November to June, most fishers migrate to Kayar, Mbour and Joal and then back to Guet Ndar for the fishing season there from April to July, and from August to November they move to Nouadhibou and the Casamance in Mauritania and the south of Senegal respectively, when the fish migrate northwards and southwards (see Bonnardel, 1992; Camara, 1968). This is in effect a culture of migration and no doubt accounts for why the fishermen and the fishing sector have come to be at the hub of clandestine migration. Being able to navigate all year round from Saint Louis to other neighbouring towns and to Nouadhibou and Nouakchott and further south to Zinguinchor has meant that they saw themselves as the conquerors of the sea. Sailing to the Canary Islands is just another fishing expedition for them, but this time fishing for the niceties of the good life.





*Guet Ndar*

Prior to boat migration, the Guet Ndariens lived a communal lifestyle where family unity was centred on the pirogue (Bonnardel, 1992: 242; Camara, 1968: 164). At fifty, a father retires and his sons go fishing together with relatives and friends under his tutelage (see Camara, 163-164). The arrival of the engine in 1953 revolutionized fishing, giving the profession an added autonomy by helping the boats to go further offshore, thus significantly increasing the fishers' catch. With the help of engines, they could navigate further out to uncharted and reproduction zones till then unchecked, which had a ripple effect on stocks and has resulted in their depletion. Larger boats and heavier engines were constructed, but while this facilitated fishing, it ironically reduced stocks. In conjunction with other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and China, their presence spelled doom as the fishermen saw themselves competing with trawlers but were handicapped by the fact that their boats could not carry enough supplies to permit them stay at sea as long and could not withstand strong waves.

Fishing created a rigid kind of lifestyle among the Guet Ndariens that was marked by simplicity and a lack of attachment to conspicuous consumption. "The Guet Ndariens do not seem to be attracted by the comfort enjoyed by the inhabitants of the island; they live according to a solid ancestral tradition marked by courage,

determination and even a certain passion for fishing... The toughness of the occupation has made them inflexible in their judgment"<sup>12</sup> (Camara, 1968: 163). Money from fishing was invested in fishing materials, pirogue engines and net repairs. Gradually, this whole notion of investing only in fishing gave way to investments in social expenditure and ostentatious consumption: "solid houses have replaced the straw huts. Their homes have become stylish, with goods of comfort; on feast days, the fisherman and his wife wear clothes of high quality and many men, including youths, can now go on pilgrimage to Mecca" <sup>13</sup>(Bonnardel, 1992: 233). This switch from a simple lifestyle to one of comfort and eventual migration to Europe can be explained by their coming into contact with previous migrants but, more importantly, the early groups of fishermen went to Mecca and came back with luxury goods. This encouraged most to abandon their old ways in pursuit of material wealth and comfort. And when boat migration started, the fishermen saw themselves not only as those whose lifestyle hinged on seasonal migration, but equally as those who had tamed and domesticated the sea. The group saw a golden opportunity in going to Spain in search of wealth and comfort, given how much their lifestyle had changed.

Guét Ndar, as the centre of boat migration, has a good number of repatriated migrants and this meant that quite a number of informants could be interviewed. Some were very articulate and provided in-depth information in interviews carried out over more than one session. I would like you to meet some of them so that in what follows they can be related to a locality.

Sall, whom we met in the opening paragraph, served not only as my research guide but was also very generous with information. Apart from migrating to Spain, he has lived in St Louis for most of his life. After the initial interview with Sall, subsequent interviews were mostly informal. I was able to meet many other repatriated migrants, since he knows almost everyone who went and was sent back, and given his dual role as a conveyor and migrant. Thanks to him, I was able to infiltrate the highly secretive network of conveyors. The informants with whom I had more than one interview are listed below. There was Moussa, the educated migrant whom we will meet later. We will also meet Malick who played a major role as a conveyor and migrant, but was unlucky enough to have been arrested prior to the departure of the boat. Dieng, Amadou, Diagne, Baye and Thiane

are some of the informants, who echoed what most informants said but were distinct in the way they conveyed the information and their generosity with information. Yussuf and Mamadou were outstanding. As much as they would like to migrate, boat migration is not an option for them because they found the boat journey to risky. Among the conveyors, we have Modou who was very cooperative, Tall, Sane and Djiby. Badara, the established middleman, gave insights into how the middlemen operated. The women were also instrumental as their role is not negligible. There was Maty, the mother with a son in Spain, and Fatou, another mother with two sons and a brother in Spain. There were Soda and Sokhna, whose husbands are in Spain, and Yacine, whose husband died in the process of migrating. As regards family history, Sall's maternal uncles were interviewed, as well as Demba, Oumar, Biramp and Ndiaye.



*Guet Ndar*

### **Yarakh and Thiaroye-sur-Mer**

These are neighbouring fishing villages on the outskirts of Dakar, and have the highest number of missing and dead migrants. This can be explained by the inexperience of the boat captains from these areas. From the bus into these villages, one meanders through the narrow alleyways to get to one's destination. Like in Guet Ndar, there is a lack of adequate health facilities and no good school. The infrastructure here is old and dilapidated, with people constructing houses out of old corrugated iron sheets. A serious lack of sanitation

means that sewage ends up in the ocean, and children defecate along the sea shore. Because of the cramped nature of the houses, most inhabitants usually sit along the verandas in front of their homes. My guide in these neighbourhoods was Mohammed, a migrant as well, who was able to introduce me to these areas because he has family members here. In Yarakh, I met his uncle, Ahmed, and his cousin, Saidou. We also met Fatou, the mother of two sons who has a brother in Spain, and Rhama, whose husband is in Spain. Libas and his wife were also interviewed in Yarakh. In Thiaroye-sur-Mer we met Khady, who spent FCFA 1 million to send her two sons, including Moustapha (one of the sons) whom I interviewed, to Spain.



*Unsuccessful piroque that developed problems and returned to Yarakh*

## **M'bour**

M'bour is about 80 km outside Dakar and is known as *la petite côte* [the small coast], a renowned tourist site due to its white sandy beaches. The fishing community of the *Lebous* migrated here from Saint Louis and settled in Tefesse, a neighbourhood of M'bour, in 1896. In many ways, Tefesse has the same characteristics as Guet Ndar. Although it is filthy and with unpaved roads, the layout of

the neighbourhood is well planned. Ass was one of my key informants in M'bour. Extensive interviews were held with him and his two wives, and I followed his activities as he struggled to reintegrate as a *mareyeur*, a fish and seafood wholesaler. He took me to meet his successful migrant friend Coumba. Ndoye and Seck were also resourceful, as was Binta, whose spouse I met in Saint Louis.

## Kayar

Oral history holds that Kayar, like M'bour, was founded by two brothers, the former by Jaaraf Mbour Ndoye in 1873 and the latter by Beytir Ndoye, who went fishing and discovered that M'bour was rich in fish stocks (Field notes: 05/11/08). The fishermen in Kayar live in a much more closed society, and it was difficult to get information from them. One general characteristic of the entire fishing neighbourhoods was the high level of filth. In Kayar, the gutters have been turned into rubbish dumps, and there is a lot of stagnant water. With the network negotiated for me from Saint Louis, it was easy to meet informants. Amongst them were Sarr, who was instrumental in putting me in contact with the people on the list of names I was given in Saint Louis. One of them was Therno who, after three years in Italy, was repatriated. Himself a migrant, Sarr and I had three sessions of interviews. Diallo, the university dropout, whom you will meet later, granted me three interviews and showed me the graves of migrants who were fished out of the sea in Kayar. Alioun is a *mareyeur* who is the intermediary between migrants and *marabouts*. Our interview focused on the future of fishing and how it could be revived. Among the womenfolk, interviews were held with Fatima and Yacine, whose husbands are in Spain, and Awa, whose husband died in the course of migrating. These are the voices that represent all those you will not meet but who remain in the background.

## Methodology

The following sections describe how I negotiated my way into the different communities and how I was able to get the information that would become this thesis. Researching such a topic was challenging, and it was hard to get informants to agree to grant

interviews due to the secretive nature of migration. As such, I had to work hard to be accepted in the various communities and also to gain people's trust and confidence, and not to be perceived as a spy.

Mohammed was instrumental in facilitating my integration into the migrants' families, and later would become my research guide in Dakar.<sup>14</sup> A migrant himself, he agreed to take me to see his uncle and cousins who were on the same boat but failed to reach Spain, and later his aunt whose two sons successfully migrated to Spain. For the next three weeks, I visited those families and on each visit small amounts of information were divulged. They were not sure whether to trust me, as each time I was asked if I was a journalist. Meanwhile, Mohammed privately told the family to feel safe to discuss any information. Complete acceptance came one day when we prepared a meal together and all ate from the same bowl. All subsequent contacts were negotiated for me by them. Before I went to a new community, family and friends would be informed well ahead of my arrival and would be waiting for me. Winning the confidence of these families was key to accessing all the subsequent contacts and the snowball effect was easy to see. Small gifts and offering to prepare tea (*ataya*) were seen as a mark of integration as it requires time and patience to make and serve this tea.

*Ataya* is the strong bitter green tea imported from Mauritania and China, which is consumed in vast quantities by Muslims and the Senegalese, in general. Its consumption is an integral part of the daily lives of my informants, who sit for hours every day preparing it. It acts as a crowd puller, and when there is a fire lit in the yards of the homes I frequented, other idle males come to sit around for a cup of tea. Lots of informal conversations took place, and I later on followed up these conversations with one-to-one interviews with some of the people. I usually went along with some tea and sugar during my visits to Yarakh and Thiaroye-sur-Mer as it gave me a good opportunity to meet different people or have follow-up discussions and more formal interviews to elaborate on previous conversations. During the time with these families, a lot of information was gleaned from informal conversations.

Apart from multi-sited research and interviews, my research was highly dependent on group meetings and a near street ethnography as whenever my research assistant saw a migrant he knew or a group of men sitting in a shade – 'le hangar' by the sea (he knew almost all the repatriated migrants) we wasted no time in getting an interview

and exchanging phone numbers for follow-up interviews. Working with research assistants was very useful, and I depended on them for contacts and interpretation in the course of an interview. When an informant was fluent in French, I had an exhaustive interview and follow-up interviews because I did not need an interpreter.

This research was essentially qualitative because I chose to focus more on the stories of the migrants to understand the underlying reasons for their exodus and not on the statistics of how many have left or been repatriated, though the number of those repatriated is startling – 4700 (*Cahier d'Alternance*, 2007). Far more importantly, this approach was relevant in “establishing trust and confidence that are a classic part of anthropological fieldwork, and are particularly suited to investigating activities that may be clandestine” (MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000: 19). In the course of data collection, moments of observation and waiting proved useful too as they gave me an understanding of how migration is perceived by families and of the importance of a migrant to the family.

Boat migration, as mentioned earlier, involved fishermen who played a dual role as both organizer and migrant. To understand the prevalence of migration among this group, I included one more research tool: life histories. These would prove useful in providing insight into how this community is organized, an overview of its fishing economy in the past and its present state, and the changes that have occurred and had such ramifications for this community. The timing of the life histories could not have been better as I was by then a familiar face. Informants responded positively to my questions and requests to tape their stories less because of the potential value for my research but because it was consistent with our good personal relationship. I recorded the life histories of four families. Two were recorded over three sessions in Wolof and two over two sessions in French. On one of those two occasions in French, the whole family was present and the wife's constant fidgeting and shyness illustrated how uncomfortable she was with some of the stories that were being told by her husband. Some interviews were conducted in Wolof with the help of an interpreter, and were shorter than those done in French. Interviews in French showed the great extent to which knowledge of a common working language could be useful in research.

Listening to their stories, we can see more clearly how they understand the present. In the stories of Gora and Biramp, the past and the present are corroborated by their evaluative statements towards the end: "we never believed what Arnaud<sup>15</sup> told us in 1932, but today we regret not having heeded his warnings and advice".

Apart from the above-mentioned research tools of interviews, conversations, snowballing observations and life histories, archival data and NGO reports were also sought. Newspaper articles were gathered from archives, and reports from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) were given to me by personnel at their office.

The collection of data was not sequential during the research project due to impediments beyond my control. First and foremost, the migrants' mobility was a serious problem and delayed follow-up interviews. Some migrated to Nouakchott or Nouadhibou for onward migration to Spain or went fishing, while others would go out to look for their *depense quotidienne* [daily livelihood]. This helps to explain the long hours of waiting. Others repeatedly failed to keep appointments. One important period stands out in the facilitating process of data collection, namely the month of Ramadan.<sup>16</sup> Then it was very easy to meet informants, especially after afternoon prayers at the mosque, and this illustrates how religion not only played a major role in my research but also occupies a strategic position in boat migration, as will be seen in later chapters. A third visit to Saint Louis after Ramadan was proof of this as most informants had resumed normal fishing activities or had moved to Mauritania for onward migration. To a certain extent, this research depended on seizing opportunities and chances, a degree of mobility on the part of the researcher and the research assistant, as well as on a constant search for innovative ways of data collection.

Researching this topic was fascinating, enjoyable and challenging. Fascinating because of the many good people I met who willingly opened up their lives to a perfect stranger and received me with warmth and hope, as someone who would tell their tale to the rest of the world. I became completely enthralled by how much they came to trust and accept me as part of their families and even more so by the long-lasting relationship that has emerged between us.



In spite of these positive comments, it was not all rosy and I faced challenges too. Although some informants agreed to be interviewed, they were very economical with their information as they gave away as little as possible. Others completely shut me out of their lives because they had come a long way towards living a stable life and did not want to be reminded of the trauma they had been through at sea. It is a part of their lives that will never go away but one that they do all they can to forget. A case in point is Ibrahim, whom we met in Saint Louis. He was verbally hostile towards me and ordered Sall and I to leave him in peace saying “I do not want to be reminded of what I went through at sea. Do you think is it fun having to throw your friend into the ocean? Please leave me alone!” Of course, we respected his wishes and my heart went out to him. These are some of the images that mark my fieldwork and will stay with me forever. In addition, given the increase in police arrests, those who were unwilling to share their experiences with me tended to be suspicious, perceiving me more as a spy than as a researcher. Others openly demanded a cash payment before they would talk to me because the time they spent talking to me was time they would have spent earning money elsewhere. Still others agreed to give interviews but did not want them recorded, and some even refused to let me take notes either.

Coming into contact with informants who were sick or whose wives or children were sick meant that it was quite difficult to remain indifferent to the situation. At times I was asked for financial assistance to buy medication and at other times the request was implicit. For instance, I visited Saidou’s pregnant wife who was in hospital suffering from a severe bout of malaria but he had no money to pay for her last set of drips and drugs. I paid for them although I was not asked outright to do so. Similarly, I visited another informant, and one of his daughters came to show me the fungal infection on her head. This was her way of indirectly telling me she needed medication.

Providing fruit or meat for the host family was done routinely to ensure not only a good diet for the researcher but for the entire family as well. None of these problems were new to the researcher as we are reminded by Nyamnjoh (2009) that “a researcher would

always encounter such problems but what matters is how these can be carefully weaved into the ongoing research to make meaning of the lives of the researched".

It is difficult as a researcher to remain neutral in the face of such personal interactions. This raises the question of how much research ethics were respected. However, as De Bruijn (1998) stresses, "more room must be created for moments in fieldwork that do not seem to convey information". These are the moments that mark out my fieldwork and allowed my integration into the various communities. Gifts neither interfered with the collection of data nor distorted any relationship. If anything, they helped with bonding and enhancing the people's trust in me. These gestures, as suggested by De Bruijn (Ibid.), were the right thing to do and not making them would be tantamount to unethical behaviour and there would be nothing binding us.

At most of the homes that we visited regularly, we were invited to stay for lunch. On such regular visits, it was hard to eat each time and leave without making a gesture of appreciation or not going on another occasion with a small gift of tea and sugar. Similarly, on my last trip to Saint Louis, when I went round to say farewell to all my informants, some had prepared meals and were waiting for us, while others gave me gifts. It was hard not to be emotionally affected.

## **Chapters and thematic review**

Chapter One highlights the different themes discussed and the methods used during this research project. It also gives an insight into the various research sites and informants.

Chapter Two provides an overview of boat migration and its origins, and look at the actors who organize boat migration, as well as the profile of the migrants. It goes further to examine the processes involved and the events that take place in-between. The central argument in this chapter is that, contrary to assumptions that boat migration involves only the youth, people of all ages from minors as young as ten years old through to adults of fifty years of age are in fact involved. The second argument is that boat migration did not come out of the blue; it was introduced by the Spanish and later appropriated by the Senegalese. Stringent border controls and tough visa policies have led migrants to seek alternative means of entry into Europe. In addition, this chapter looks at the margins

and how they operate beyond the long arm of the law. The chapter attempts to shed light on how migrants are seeking to assert themselves at the margins, given that these margins are constantly being contested and have become a no-go area for the government.

Chapter Three investigates why fishermen are at the epicentre of boat migration. To have a full grasp of this, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of the fishing sector in the past and its present state. This chapter documents the effects of migration on the sector itself and the economy, and on the fishermen. Through life histories and archival analysis of how concessions were given to the European Union and other countries, the history of fishing will become clear. The information presented is also informed by on-site interviews with repatriated migrants and their families. My argument here is that inasmuch as the government has not been fully engaged in developing the fish sector, neither has policy been developed to reflect the current situation. The government cannot be completely blamed for the degradation and lack of resources in the fishing sector. The fishers and the *mareyeurs* also have to take some responsibility here, and this demands a change of attitude and education. The chapter will also highlight the role of religion in the fishing community and how religion has transcended their “normal” fishing activities and become an essential part of how migrants look at migration. Not accepting migration tends to be seen as “abnormal”. Given that religion pervades all aspects of society and beliefs, this theme runs through the entire study. This chapter revisits the theme of marginality from an emic/etic point of view and discuss how the communities perceive themselves as being marginalized by the government but equally how society is layered with no effective leadership.

In Chapter Four, I attempt to establish a link between migration and relationships at home. This chapter tries to answer questions about whether migration has been a panacea to the much-discussed improvement in livelihoods. It focuses on the economy of boat migration and seeks to establish who are the victors and the vanquished. What are the consequences of failed and successful migration on relationships at home? I argue that boat migration has been a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it has produced heroes, and on the other it has produced villains and ruptured long-standing relationships. This chapter equally touches on the politics of

migration and consider to what extent the measures put in place by the Spanish and Senegalese governments are helping to reintegrate people into their respective communities. Much of this is discussed again in Chapter Eight, where my second argument is that there is a lack of commitment to put in place sustainable solutions to curb the problems plaguing the fishing sector. The corollary is mistrust between the government of Senegal and the fishermen, but the notion of religion is again considered to see how migrants use religion and *marabouts* to justify and ease the migration process.

Chapter Five discusses the perceptions and ideologies of Europe and migration, with a focus on religion and religious ideologies, how they pervade all aspects of boat migration and have become an essential part of the way migrants relate to them and cannot do without them. Although Senegal is a Muslim country, the fishermen's culture of *maraboutage* has long been part and parcel of a culture that has been translated into boat migration. I focus on how the local construction of seeking the good life and prosperity has become synonymous with Europe and how this construction is impacting on the mindset of the migrants and informs their movement. I argue that migration is not only a collective measure by the family to improve its livelihood, but that the massive number of migrants is largely due to a culture of migration. As much as I agree that migration is a result of poverty, I also argue that the link between migration and poverty is complex as it is negotiated through layers of needs, networks and choices. Since these needs and choices operate in varied cultural settings, a critical attempt is made to better understand the invisible underlying causes that have escaped our grasp, especially the development discourse and the media. In this chapter, all the above-mentioned aspects of religion are brought together to show how they form part of the culture of migration.

Chapter Six dwells on how migrants navigate and harness the possibility of networks at their disposal. Given the important role of networking in the migration, this chapter investigates how would-be migrants and repatriated migrants are continuously negotiating their way with the help of the networks they can muster. My argument is that social networks are an important aspect of social capital, as the number and types of exchanges between people within the networks and shared identities that develop can influence the degree of support an individual has and offer access to other sources of help.

In Chapter Seven, the focus is on governance and fishery policies and I chronicle how migrants have moved with the flow of migration from Senegal to Mauritania following the stringent measures taken by the government. Policies adopted by the Spanish and French governments have largely been guided by fear and have not helped to solve the ‘problem’ of boat migration. The cooperation of sending countries has simply been following the strategies outlined by the receiving countries because of the money received from receiving countries as development aid. The policies introduced by the Senegalese government have mainly been top-down in response to the demands of the sending countries and the migrants, on whose behalf decisions are taken, are kept out of all negotiation; their voices have been silenced. Despite the top-down nature of policies, governments appear to lack the political will to find a lasting solution, but are rather concerned with swelling their bank accounts with money meant to help the migrants.

Chapter Eight provides a summary of the results of this thesis and offers some recommendations.

## **Notes**

1. Sall was my research guide in St Louis while Mohammed was my guide in and around Dakar. The distance between Dakar and St Louis (about 285 km) did not permit using the same guide and I wanted someone who knew the terrain well in each location.
2. The migrant community of fishers under study is headed by a patriarch and, until his death, his son is not allowed to take any decisions and any income from fishing is handed over to him for redistribution.
3. « là vision culturaliste qui définit la migration comme un ‘trait culturel’, une pratique intégrée dans un système de valeur et un mode de vie spécifique ».
4. « cette tradition du voyage fonctionnant comme un rite initiatique. »
5. Popular names for migrants in Senegal.
6. From the different points of departure within Senegal: Yarakh, Thiaroye-sur-Mer, Kayar, M'bour, Saint Louis and Dakar.

7. « ... séparée de la Mauritanie, reléguée aux confins les plus pauvres de l'espace national, Saint Louis, depuis trente ans, vit exilé... La ville n'a plus aucun trafic maritime depuis fin de 1963; aucun trafic fluvial de messageries depuis 1971; le trafic ferroviaire entre Saint-Louis et Dakar est moribund; le commerce colonial de gros, dès 1960, a déserté l'ancienne capital, qui ne joue plus aucun rôle dans l'approvisionnement de la Mauritanie et n'intervient que faiblement dans celui de la vallée. »
8. « Elle feint régner, dans l'ancienne capitale, l'ordre de la pauvreté, de la marginalité et de la débrouillardise. »
9. « Il est possible qu'il ait existé avant la naissance de Saint-Louis ou en même temps. »
10. « Ils sont et vivent dans leur monde, là où c'est la salitée qui règne! »
11. « En premier contact, est vieillot et paraît se rattacher à un passé villageois et colonial désuet. On se croirait plutôt dans un campement rural incroyablement malpropre que dans un quartier urbain. »
12. « Le Guet Ndarien ne semble pas attiré le confort que connaissent les habitants de l'île; il vit selon une tradition ancestrale solidement établie, faite du courage, de volonté et même d'une sorte de passion pour la pêche... La rudesse du métier a fait de lui un homme au jugement rigide... »
13. « les maisons en dur ont remplacé toutes les pailletes. La demeure deviant coquette, se garnit d'objets de confort; le pêcheur et sa femme, les jours de fête, ont des vêtements de qualité; beaucoup des hommes, y comprise les jeunes, peuvent s'offrir le pèlerinage à la Mecque. »
14. He was my research guide in Dakar and the suburbs of Thiaroye-sur-Mer and Yarakh.
15. He was the fisheries expert during the French colonial period who introduced boat engines but warned about the consequences and the invasion of trawlers in the not-too-distant future.
16. A month of fasting, praying and studying the Koran with few extra outside activities taking place and, if they do, they are early in the morning.

### The genesis of boat migration

#### **Introduction**

To those who engaged in it, boat migration was a windfall that was welcomed by many. It came about to a large extent as a result of stringent measures of border control and tough visa policies. Implicitly, other factors had been building up to have led to this explosion such as the marginal position of the would-be migrants, especially the focus group under study – fishers, as well as the underlying disregard of the age-old tradition that kept this group bonded.

The current generation of fishers thus turn to migration as a form of revolt, denouncing the customs where a young adult is still under the tutelage of his father; even though the latter has retired, he still controls the income generated from fishing by his son(s). But they also see migration as a form of revolt against the government's policy and their marginalisation as subalterns. What could be considered as the last straw was the high cost of fuel and fishing material. Unable to cope with this increase and with no knowledge of any other profession, they resorted to migrating to Europe as farm labourers. This in fact confirms the structuralist approach which, according to Stalker (2001: 22), perceives the migrant as a “ball in the pinball machine, knocked around by forces beyond his/her control”. He goes on to say that these forces could be economic, social or political – pushing people out of one country and pulling them towards another. Although this approach does not account for cultural factors, its explanation is not limited to the economic factor as in the neo-classical approach, which sees migration as an individual choice. As we have just seen in the introductory chapter, this is not the case. The world system approach has gone a step further to be all-inclusive, taking into account the socio-economic, political and cultural factors and merging them into one seamless whole (Stalker, 2001; Castles & Miller, 2003).

This chapter therefore sets out to shed light on how this form of migration came about. How is it organised? Who are those who make up the bulk of the migrants and why? But first, it will provide

an overview of migration and in particular that of Senegal. I will move on to detail the organisation of boat migration, paying attention to its monetary aspects, and then I will discuss the demographics of boat migration. I argue that contrary to assumptions that boat migration involved only the youth, empirical evidence shows that there were people of all ages involved – men, women and minors. I will also present a profile of the migrants. The chapter winds up with a discussion on how migration thrives at the margin. As regards the margin, I will explore both the geographic and social margins. Let us now turn our attention to an overview of migration.

### **Overview of migration**

Migration has been and is still running through the warp and weft of human history dating back to the slave migrations and later the transatlantic and trans-Saharan migrations of West Africa to North Africa in the nineteenth century (De Haas, 2007; De Bruijn *et al*, 2001; De Bruijn, 2007; Massey *et al*, 1998; Hannerz, 1996).

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were radical changes in intra-regional migration patterns due to the colonisation of North and West Africa by the French and English. The corollary was a pre-modern migration that was wage labour oriented from rural areas to the coastlines that had been developed into large farms in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and The Gambia. These movements were predominantly North-South movements from landlocked countries of Sahel West Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) to the more prosperous cities of coastal West Africa (mainly Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria) (Arthur, 1991; Findley & Sow, 1998; Findley, 2004). These coast-bound international migration patterns have often been reproduced inside countries, with people moving from the relatively arid and underdeveloped inland zones to the often more prosperous agricultural and urbanised zones (De Haas, 2007). In Senegal, due to prolonged droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, farmers abandoned their farms and moved to the city in search of jobs (Findley, 1989; Linares, 2003). Also, Senegal's relative stability and its status as the capital of "*l'Afrique occidentale*" during the colonial era increased its appeal as a transit and immigration country.



In Africa and Senegal in particular, migration is as important today as it has always been, even if the nature and causes have changed over time. Lambert sums it all in reference to Senegal as he contends that “migration has become an activity of growing up” (2002: 4). By the 1990s, West Africans started to expand their geographical horizons and this led to the surge in trans-Saharan migration to Libya and other North African countries (De Haas, 2007); with Libya’s change of policy,<sup>1</sup> Libya became the main destination country.

By the late 1990s and early 2000, however, growing resentment of Sub Saharan Africans (SSA henceforth) by the Libyans led to repressive measures, including expulsion. Indeed, it led to a fundamental shift, with SSA migrants joining the flow of Maghrebis who had already started crossing the Mediterranean illegally in fishing boats since Italy and Spain introduced visa requirements for North Africa workers in the early 1990s (Ibid, 2007). According to Fall (2007) and De Haas (2007), a complete shift in migration patterns emerged as a result of the European Union’s tightening of visa policies and the intensification of migration controls at points of entry, increasing the number of SSA migrants who fell back on crossing into Europe through the Atlantic Ocean.

### **Boat migration in Senegal**

Prior to boat migration to the Canary Islands, irregular immigration by larger vessels was a more established practice as far back as the 1970s, whereby a good number of irregular migrants embarked either illegally or with the complicity of the sailors after paying huge sums of money. Most informants tell of how friends and/or relatives went to Europe by this means, by stowing away on the boats or paying huge sums of money to the sailors. First there were, according to (Ba, 2007: 7; Schmitz, 2008: 10), migrants who could afford the 2500-3000 euros fees to pay trawler owners to transport them to Spain at the end of the fishing season. Alternatively, others sought to stow away on trawlers with the complicity of local fishermen who work for the trawlers, paying a lesser fee of 500-1000 euros.

Others paid desert transporters from Nouadhibou through the Sahara desert into Morocco and entered the Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla. But the events of the night of 28-29 September 2005, when migrants tore down the fence, marked the end of the

desert route, resulting in alternative routes on the extensive Atlantic coast. The “desert survivors” (Fall, 2007; Schmitz, 2008) tried to force their way into the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (amongst them was my research guide in Saint Louis - Sall). The heavily mediated turn of events of Ceuta and Melilla can be said to be the turning point that signalled the explosion of boat migration, as would-be migrants turned to the sea route. Due to the strengthening of the fencing around the Spanish enclaves and the increase in patrols at the departure and arrival points of the desert and its environs, the trans-Sahara route died down and migrants sought alternative routes by pirogue throughout the West African coast, notably Senegal, Guinea-Bissau/Conakry and Banjul (Ba, 2007: 6-7; Fall, 2007: 4; Mbow, 2007).



*Construction of a pirogue*

Accounts by migrants have pointed to the fact that this new form of migration from the West African coasts to the Canary Islands was introduced by some Spaniards who took advantage of the surveillance of other border posts. Boat migration began in Nouadhibour and has as conveyors Spanish, Moroccans and Mauritians working together. As Sall my informant puts it, he was employed by this group to ferry migrants to Europe repeatedly. In an extended interview, this is what he says:

*"I am a fisherman and I work in Nouadhibou. One day, as we were together, my friend informed me that Spaniards, Moroccans and Mauritians are engaged in trafficking between Morocco and Spain. I told him I didn't want to go there. He was surprised, and we discussed the matter at length. One day, the Moor came in person to see me. The name of the Mauritanian was Larousi, and the Spaniard Pepe. There were Guineans, Mauritians and even Senegalese, and each of them had paid 2,500 Euros. I brought twelve Togolese, three Ghanaians, and one Malian. In all, we were twenty-three. The pirogue was bought by the Moor. Then I was paid to take these people to Spain.*

*Q: The Mauritanian paid you, a fisherman, to take these people to Spain?*

*A: Together with the Spaniard, they paid me. They gave me the information I needed for the journey. I was to go from Alghero, Puer to Ventura, etc. Pepe, Larousi Yahyia, a Moroccan, Chérif and Amar were all in a room. They gave me a pen, a sheet and a GPS. They showed the position of Morocco and the Canary Islands on a map. There were seven islands: Gran Canaria, Tenerife, Porto Ventura, Almeria, and Alghero. We made preparations on Friday, took food and other requirements. We left on 4 April 2005 at midnight. We arrived on Thursday, 11 April at 8 o'clock. The Spaniards welcomed us warmly and took us to Almeria, and I called Nouadhibou. I called Larousi and they built two other pirogues. It was the Spaniards, Mauritians and Moroccans carrying out the trafficking. From Layoun, they brought more than three hundred people. One day, I called a friend in Nouadhibou, whose name was Baye Seck Diola. I informed him that I had started working and that I was earning some money. I called another friend who asked me to join him in Paamplona, Spain. I waited for two days and Larousi called me and asked me to remain in Almeria. A Spanish friend would come and help me. He insisted that a younger brother of Pepe would come and help me to find a job. I remained in Almeria in April, May and even July. On 24 July, I was at work when he called me for us to meet in a restaurant the next day. I had a discussion with Larousi's brother, who invited me to go with him to Lanzarote. He housed me. "Tranquilo aqui trabajo mucho" [Relax; there's a lot of work here], he reassured me. We worked in a network. He proposed that I start work in the evening, and I asked what type of work. Many people died in the Morocco boat. They gave me a pirogue with a Yamaba 75 HP engine. At 10 o'clock, I had to transport people. We agreed on the price of 3000 Euros for each trip. A Senegalese named Yankhoba Seck called me to come and help them. They were in difficulty in the open sea, and 19 out of their 350 passengers had died. I was paid 3000 Euros for my first trip on 6 August 2005. (Saint Louis, 30/07/08)<sup>22</sup>*

This extensive excerpt by Sall shows just how we cannot limit boat migration to the fishers alone, but to a chain of others. Sall made two successful trips, and was arrested on the third by the Spanish coastguard. At the beginning, the fare was between 800,000 CFA francs to a million CFA francs. Due to the high fares, Senegalese decided to organise trips from Senegal (amongst them was Sall as a conveyor and migrant) in order to cut cost and also because the region of Saint Louis boasts of the best fishermen who have a mastery of the sea, and thus the phenomenon became widespread. And so this saw the birth of boat migration from the West African coast of Senegal to Spain.

This form of migration is made possible by a close knit of three principal actors: the conveyor (*passeur*), the middleman (*rabatteur*) and captains (*capitaine*). Contrary to Ba (2007: 8) who considers that the conveyors are traffickers, or Fall (2007: 4), who holds that they operate in a mafia-like group, I contend that the conveyors do not fit in any of the above categories, as they act in full collaboration with the migrants. Most often, some conveyors are driven by the demands of the migrants to organise the journey. Such is the case with Djiby and Tall, who were instigated by successful and would-be migrants to organise a boat (see also De Haas, 2007). Let us examine the roles of the different actors in detail.



*Completion of the piroque ready for migration*

## Organisation of boat migration

Boat migration is believed to have been born out of increased border controls and repression in the Maghreb. The ripple effect has been a sharp increase in migrants avoiding the trans-Saharan crossing in preference to the trans-Atlantic crossing. The actual process of boat migration involves three stages and persons to organise the journey: these include the conveyor, who is the pirogue owner and whose job is to organise the journey by providing the necessary funds; the middlemen are also migrants who go out actively recruiting prospective migrants in exchange for a twenty-five percent reduction in their fares or a cash reward of 25,000 CFA francs for each passenger brought. Often, the middlemen increase the amount of money demanded by the conveyor, thus earning some money from each passenger; seafarers/captains are also migrants who are paid by the conveyor to transport the passengers to Spain. These musketeers are inextricably linked together by the common ambition of reaching Spain. To the conveyor, it would earn him a place among migrants as one who can organise a good trip, and to the middleman and captain, their dream of reaching Spain is finally attained. It should be recalled that each pirogue makes the journey only once; if it successfully arrives in Spain, it is abandoned together with the engine and whatever is left on board.

**The conveyor.** He is the boat owner and the organiser of the journey. Often, they are either wealthy fishermen who can afford to finance the trip or a businessman in town who is conscious of how profitable the journey is, and decides to be part of it. The latter is usually more interested in the profits than in ensuring the safety of the migrants. Evidence from the captains shows that they either underestimate the fuel or buy second-hand engines resulting in boats being stranded at sea due to fuel shortages or engine failure. The fishermen are often members of the community or move from their community to another to avoid being arrested. Most often, they are persuaded by potential migrants to prepare a boat for the journey. With the help of the captain, the conveyor provides all the supplies for the journey. A good conveyor is one whose boat arrives with all the passengers alive. This does not only go to show that he invested most of the money he received in the journey, but also that he invested in seeing a *marabout*; whose benediction and protective amulets are believed to be the invisible captain that sails the boat through.



*A conveyor/migrant jailed a few days before the departure of his boat*

If *marabouts* have been the invisible captains, then the forces of law have been the visible ‘aide-de-camp’ for the conveyors in return for bribes. The conveyors are protected by some top-ranking officers whose jobs have been reduced to that of the ‘forces of lawlessness and disorder’. According to Mohammed, my research guide, there was a lot of scheming and bribery, and he tells the story of a military captain who is currently in jail and has been stripped of his functions. The said captain X worked closely with a conveyor and was his protector, and for each journey organised he received a bribe of 1.5 million CFA francs. After a while, Captain X did not hear from him or see the conveyor and was convinced that he was organising journeys without consultation or had someone else with whom he was working. However, the conveyor was bereaved and had gone to his village. The captain stormed his residence and confiscated materials bought in preparation for another journey and filed a lawsuit against the conveyor. Advised by his lawyer, the conveyor went to court and narrated their working relationship. The latter was sentenced to one month in jail, while Captain X was sentenced to five years. This confirms earlier findings by Ba (2007: 9): “It is well established that the trafficking of clandestine migrants

has developed and continues to prosper due to a vast network of corruption. The complicity of some administrative authorities is required for this type of human trafficking to develop.”<sup>3</sup>

Testifying to the above, Tall admits he was persuaded by the incessant number of migrants who asked him to prepare a boat, and was assured by some that they would look for friends to complete the required number. Tall is 47 years old, a polygamist with two wives, seven children and a seasoned fisherman. He is considered by peers to be a successful fisherman as he owns two pirogues, two nets and three engines and covers long distances when he goes fishing. The migrants who proposed that he prepares a journey became the middlemen who went out actively recruiting friends and convincing those who had not yet made up their minds. When there are more than two middlemen working for a conveyor, they are not paid but are either transported for free or their fares are reduced significantly; this is what Tall did. Although he acknowledges the profit made from transporting the migrants, he equally avowed the enormous challenges involved: “It is very difficult to sleep because your mobile phone rings all the time, and since the business was not controlled, there was a lot of corruption among the police who asked for money and that their family members be transported free of charge.” (Saint Louis, 12/09/08).<sup>4</sup> This also goes to confirm the participation of the forces of law, who turned a blind eye to this illegal and dangerous crossing, and were rather interested in some of their relatives going as well. Thus, they used their positions to intimidate conveyors into paying huge bribes, in addition take members of their families.

Assured of enough passengers, the conveyor then goes on to purchase the following items, often with the money paid by the migrants:

|                                                               |                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Two brand-new engines of 40 horse power,<br>at 1,900,000 each | 3,800,000 CFA francs |
| Fuel – 14 jerry cans of 200L at 650 CFA<br>francs per litre   | 1,820,000 CFA francs |
| Food and provisions                                           | 2,500,000 CFA francs |
| GPS – 2 at 100,000 CFA francs each                            | 200,000 CFA francs   |
| Water – 1000 L                                                | 150,000 CFA francs   |

|                                                                                             |                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 12 crew members at 200,000 CFA francs each                                                  | 2,400,000 CFA francs  |
| Contingencies                                                                               | 1,000,000 CFA francs  |
| Passengers 170 (only 148 paid, less 12 crew with 10 family members) 350,000 CFA francs each | 51,800,000 CFA francs |
| Total Expenditure (TE)                                                                      | 11,870,000 CFA francs |
| Gross Profit (P)                                                                            | 51,800,000 CFA francs |
| Net Profit (P-TE)                                                                           | 39,930,000 CFA francs |

In as much as conveyors are driven by profits to get involved in the migration business, as seen from the expenses and logistics required, the undertaking also needs an experienced fisher who is equally dedicated to seeing that the boat is sufficiently fit to reach its destination. A conveyor only has to make a journey once and fails to get more passengers for the next trip if information should circulate that he did not adequately prepare for the journey by providing all the above mentioned.



*The house is an investment made by a conveyor thanks to boat migration*



**The middleman:** These are often would-be migrants in their own right and fishermen who have decided to work for the conveyor as a recruiting agent for a fee and/or free seat in the boat. In most cases, the middleman is offered a free seat on the boat and one extra seat which he can decide to sell or offer to a relative. For instance, Moussa was a middleman in Nouadhidou who was offered 25,000 CFA francs for each passenger he recruited and also offered a free seat. In turn, he offered the seat to a Nigerian, and the money he got from it was used as the bride price for his wife. It is rare to find a middleman such as Moussa, who gives up his seat, as all middleman aspire to migrate to Spain once the boat is ready to leave. Moussa is a graduate from a professional technical institute and trained as an electrician, but has been unable to find a job. He is 28 years old, married with two children and the only person I met in Guet Ndar whose spouse is a student in high school. Throughout the interview, Moussa comes across as a very disillusioned man, judging from the bitterness in his tone and his long moments of silence. Despite his mockery of the system for not creating employment for the graduates like him, he still hopes his wife will be the one to pull the family through once she gets a job after her studies.

The story is different in Badara's case. Badara established himself as a renowned middleman and worked for the same conveyor in sending three boats in 2004, 2005 and 2006; two boats left from Sally Portudal and one from Elinkine in the Casamance; he was a passenger in all these boats, but was repatriated each time. He is 32 years old, and he quit his job to migrate to Spain, but has been unfortunate not to have made it. Like Moussa, Badara is educated but dropped out of school and worked for CFAO (a motor centre and garage) until he quit in order to migrate to Spain. He created a tense atmosphere during the interview and often responded to my questions by posing a question or was evasive in his response. But about two hours into the interview, he calmed down and responded directly to the questions. He describes what their role is and how it functions:

*'We recruit people gently, not by force. We ask them if they want to go to Spain, and whether they know of any pirogues leaving. If you are a warrior, you make up your mind. If you accept to go, we ask for 400,000 CFA francs. You can bid*

*down the price to 350,000 CFA francs, and then we agree on the price. We encourage and cheer you up, and this builds confidence. You can keep the money until the time of departure and you can come with friends. Before the day of departure, you must confirm by giving us your phone number. It is only at the last moment that you will be told the precise time and date.” (Sally Portudal, 21/07/08).<sup>5</sup>*



*Repatriated migrants  
and conveyors  
at the hangar*

To him, the conveyor cannot do without him, as he maintains that “the conveyor cannot organize a trip without me. I am the brain, but he has the money.”<sup>6</sup> This goes to show the important role the middlemen play in the process because the success of the journey depends entirely on them in terms of the number of passengers and the time lapse for the boat’s departure. When a conveyor is not willing to pay a middleman immediately he brings a recruit, he wastes no time in diverting and working for another conveyor. This is also because once a conveyor decides to prepare a boat, the sooner the boat leaves the better, for delaying may result in his arrest and the confiscation of all the provisions and the boat. Thanks to the importance of their role, Moussa was able to raise nine hundred thousand CFA francs (approximately 590 Euros).

**The Captain:** Like the middleman, he is also a migrant. They are the ones who navigate the boat from Senegal to Spain. During the boom of boat migration, not all captains were sought after;

those from Guet Ndar, known as ‘les Guet Ndariens’, and those who hail from Saint Louis are the most sought-after due to their experience and mastery of the sea, unlike their counterparts in Kayar, M’bour and Yarakh. The mere fact of having a Guet Ndarien as captain attracts passengers as it gives them assurance that the boat will arrive at its destination. The conveyor chooses the first captain, who in turn chooses the crew with which he would like to travel. Often, the crew is chosen from the group of friends with whom he usually goes fishing. The captain is paid between 200,000 and 250,000 CFA francs, while each assistant is paid about 150,000 CFA francs. Crew members do not pay for the journey. As captain, he works in collaboration with the conveyor to ensure that all the necessary supplies for the journey are available. He coordinates the buying of the supplies such as food, water, medication and fuel, and transports them with smaller boats to the boat that is usually anchored about 200 metres into the ocean. On the day of departure, passengers are transported by the same means. It is also the duty of the captain to monitor the weather forecast via the internet a week prior to their departure. Given that they are always illiterate, the captains pay the cyber-cafe staff to check on it for them. When the forecast shows the weather will be good for the next seven consecutive days, the day for the journey is planned accordingly, and all the passengers are asked to rally at a specific location.



## **Demographics of boat migration**

Migration is heavily institutionalized and limited mostly to male migrants. This notwithstanding, boat migration was undertaken by a diverse population, including women, minors (15 years and below) and men as old as 50 years. The involvement of minors is fanned by news that upon arrival they are more likely to stay as it is difficult for them to be expelled. The women are retained for humanitarian reasons, while the minors are protected by Spanish law and that of the Red Cross under which the minors are kept and are integrated into the society by enrolment in Spanish lessons. Neighbourhoods like M'bour, Thiaroye-Sur-Mer and Saint Louis saw a good number of minors who followed boats to Spain. According to conveyors and captains, few of these minors set out to migrate; they were either taken along by elder brothers or fathers (captains) or simply employed by the conveyor to bail water from the boat and/or as cooks. Hence they did not have to pay for their journey. A repatriated captain in Kayar tells of how many minors were in his boat:

*"There were 74 people. There were 9 minors, and 12 Gambians. The minors included my elder sister's son and my elder brother's two sons; the others had hidden in the pirogue. I discovered them only in the open sea."*

I asked if the minors were repatriated along with them.

*"They remained in Spain. Minors are not repatriated. They are currently living under good conditions. My elder brother's son often sends me 15,000 or 20,000 CFA francs". (Mbour, 29/10/08).<sup>8</sup>*

One of the minors I met was repatriated because the Spanish authorities were in doubt about his age (they claimed he was older than he said). According to this minor, he was employed as a cook. For instance, according to one informant in M'bour, he regretted not travelling with his 14-year-old son. He tells how of the ninety-three passengers he took to Spain, ten were minors taken along by brothers and parents (captains) while two were employed by the conveyor as cook and water porters. According to my informant, they were all repatriated but for the minors. He feels that if he had

taken his eldest son along, this would have guaranteed a secure retirement for him and his family. When news of admittance of minors reached M'bour, most families decided to improve their chances by sending two members of the family – one minor and an adult. In some cases, the result is catastrophic for some families as minors cannot endure the difficulty of the journey – death is often inevitable. This is the case of two brothers in the same boat<sup>9</sup> who died within two days of each other during their eleven-day ordeal at sea. According to Mohammed, the minor died first out of dehydration, and the brother was helped by the passengers to throw the body overboard. Two days later, the brother also gave up the ghost. The departure of both minors and adults shows just how much families want to guarantee a sustainable livelihood by expanding their chances. Ba (2007) draws our attention to the gravity of this migration wherein, in certain neighbourhoods, organising a football match has become increasingly difficult because of the departure of these age cohorts. But as Diallo concludes, thanks to repatriation, the villages are beginning to take their normal form as they were beginning to look as if they were made up of women and old people only; a consequence which would have been disastrous given that the villages would have been left with only females, and given how long they would have to wait for the men to come back.

Female migrants were limited as earlier mentioned, and when they did migrate, they were taken care of by the crew and the rest of the passengers. Of the captains I interviewed, two testified to having transported females. One had five females, one of whom was pregnant; the other had three women. All of them were retained. But then, how can we explain the fact that most women did not warm to boat migration? This can be explained by the fact that there is a social division of labour in the society, which is heavily male-dominated, and the women are expected to stay at home and look after the family while the men provide for the family. It can also be linked to the difficulty of the journey and the distaste of women for migrating through this means. However, this cannot completely explain why Senegalese women do not go, for most of the women who choose to migrate are from other sub-region such as Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon. In their edited volume, the students of “Centre d’Etudes des Sciences et Techniques de

l'Information" (CESTI henceforth) of the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar hold that boat migration involves only four percent of women as opposed to ninety-six percent of men (2007: 51). This notwithstanding, the most recent case of boat migration that was intercepted was comprised mostly of females. And this begs the question why they chose to embark on it when the shores are heavily guarded. The increase of female migrants in the later stage of boat migration was marked by casualties suffered even before they could make their way into high seas. On January 4, 2009 four bodies (all females) were washed ashore at Camberene, a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Dakar. Apparently, their boat had set off from Yoff, another fishing village on the outskirts of Dakar. The discovery of these bodies led to a hunt for the boat as it was evident that they were migrants en route. On 8, January 2009 the boat was intercepted a few kilometres off the shore of Kayar. On board were twenty-five migrants – fourteen females, seven males and four crew, all of whom were from Kayar. Although females and minors form a smaller number of migrants, it still shows how the phenomenon cut across all gender and age groups.

### **Profile of the migrants**

Although boat migration has involved a varying degree of different groups of migrants, the majority of the migrants, as seen above, are males between the ages of 10-50. The migrants come from the surrounding villages of the points of departure; some are street hawkers, and some are farmers from further afield in the villages which, as a result of drought, had given up farming and moved to settle among the fishermen to become apprentice fishermen. But others are school dropouts or those who have successfully completed their studies with certificates and faced with unemployment, turned to boat migration as an alternative to changing their livelihood. By far, most of the migrants are fishermen from the different neighbouring communities and the points of departure – the focus of this study.

Mass media campaigns and theoretical literature have portrayed the profile of the migrants as desperate youths who are fleeing poverty (BBC, AFP; Ba, 2007; Fall, 2007; Schmitz, 2008). But from empirical evidence, boat migration has pulled together the young and the old. Abdoulaye, 24 years old, is a young hawker in the

streets of Dakar who has always dreamed of going to Europe and becoming a footballer. Like most migrants, he is the eldest son of his family, hence he has the obligation to look after the family. I met him on the streets of Dakar at *Place de l'indépendance* after a bad day (no sales). Abdoulaye, at first apprehensive about talking to me, later on opened up to tell his story. According to him, it was imperative for him to travel in order to take care of the family and to realise his dream of becoming a footballer. He paid 400,000 CFA francs – money he had saved in two years. But unfortunately, his boat did not get to Spain because it developed problems and they were rescued by a Moroccan vessel. In broken French interspersed with Wolof, he told me: “when you are the eldest in a family, you have to be resourceful and provide for your family.”<sup>10</sup> Next to Abdoulaye was Saliou, a 50-year-old hawker and polygamist with three wives and thirteen children (and another on the way). He had with him five children’s dresses that he was selling and for that day he had managed to sell two. He shares a single room in Pekine at the outskirts of Dakar with two other adults, while his family resides in the village. He has an obligation to send income to the family every fortnight. He also paid the conveyor 450,000 CFA francs, but only went as far as Mauritania for their boat was intercepted by FRONTEX, the European Union coast guard security. He was reimbursed 250,000 CFA francs by the conveyor. Corroborating this, Ndiaye (55 years), whom we spoke to in Saint Louis, confirmed that a few of his friends and age cohort had also left for Spain: “A certain Ousseynou, who is older than me, is now in Spain. Therefore the phenomenon does not concern the youth alone; old people are also among the migrants.”<sup>11</sup> I asked how many elderly men have travelled that he knows.

“I know five of them, four reached their destination, but the 5<sup>th</sup>, named Talla, died. Another, Doudou Fall, did not reach.”<sup>12</sup>

Mohammed is also 33 years old and married with two children. He sells artefacts in Sandaga-Dakar, and migrated together with his uncles and cousins on the same boat, but they were rescued near the Moroccan coast by a Moroccan vessel and sent back to Senegal. He paid 300,000 CFA francs.

We return to our focus group – the fishermen. This group of migrants vary in age from 10 to 50, amongst who were bachelors and married men (some polygamists) with children. The common

characteristic trait of this group of migrants was that they were usually illiterate and spoke little or no French. For instance, Samba is 27 years old and has made six attempts to reach Spain with only one successful journey; he was repatriated. Samba is a bachelor and shares a room measuring three square metres with his mother and younger brother. The furniture comprises two beds, a small cupboard, part of which contains clothes and part dishes; on the right hand corner by the door is the TV and VCD player with a radio on another smaller cupboard. Under the beds were the rest of the kitchen utensils and bags of clothing. They had to keep their kitchen utensils in the room because the compound is made up of five families sharing the same kitchen, and some prefer to cook outside. Samba is not a descendant of fishermen, although they live in Guet Ndar. After completing elementary education, he decided to go into fishing so he could help his mother, given that their father divorced her when he and his brother were five and three respectively. He had hoped to migrate and help his mother set up a business, as well as send money to his brother to pay for a Spanish or Italian visa. The appellation *Barça ou Barzarkh* (Europe at all cost) was coined by him, as he made me to understand. Baye is 32 years old, and is married with two children. Although the family owns a boat, engine and net, he had hoped to migrate and diversify the family's source of income. Like many, he was repatriated. Malick and Ass are both in their late forties and both have two wives with six and seven children respectively. They have both attempted the journey twice as conveyors and captains simultaneously. Malick's first boat developed problems at sea and they were forced to return, and while he was preparing for the second, he was arrested and locked up for six months. But the boat left, navigated by the second captain and his assistants, who incidentally (all 103 of them) are in Spain today. Malick, besides being a fisherman, runs a small grocery shop. His intention was to expand the business once he gets to Europe. As for Ass, despite his two failed attempts to reach Spain, he still went on to prepare another boat; although it arrived, only twenty out of the sixty passengers were retained in Spain.

Moussa is a high school graduate with three years of professional training as an electrician. He is one of the few who combined fishing and studies – during the long summer vacation he was a fisherman.



He is 29 years old and married with two daughters. He still lives with his parents and shares a single bedroom with his family. Unemployed, Moussa has migrated three times and twice arrived in Spain but was repatriated.

From the demographics and profile of the migrants it can be inferred that although boat migration touched both male and female, young and old, the fishermen still remained by and large the most active and engaged group (Fall, 2007: 8-9; Schmitz, 2008: 10). But as Ba points out, the first fishermen to migrate were the older ones: “the early conveyors were retired pirogue captains with a lot of experience in crossing the seas.”<sup>13</sup>(2007: 9).

Fall (2008: 9-11) also captures it well in a series of bar charts confirming that the bulk of the migrants were fishermen – as high as eighty percent compared to below twenty percent of other professionals put together (farmers, hawkers/traders and the unemployed). This explains why older fishermen also formed part of the migrants as they were the first to take advantage of the sea route.

Generally, most of the migrants are uneducated and speak only the local dialect – Wolof. In Saint Louis, from where most of the migrants come, as in other fishing neighbourhoods, the rate of literacy is very low. A few of them complete primary/elementary education, but still are not articulate in French. One would have expected that boat migration would be limited only to the uneducated; far from it. This means of migration attracted university dropouts and those who quit their jobs to migrate, such as Diallo and Badara.

Diallo is very articulate in French and made two journeys to Spain but arrived only once and was repatriated. He is 42 years old and married with three children. He quit his studies due to the fact that his stipend was withdrawn and he had no financial assistance, as his father had passed away. (On this turn to chapter four – case studies). Equally, others quit their jobs to migrate because they consider the job not to be well paid compared to what they hoped to get if they migrated. Badara worked for an auto company – CFAO – but quit the job to migrate, and established himself as a middleman for the same conveyor in three journeys; he was repatriated on all three occasions.

Like Badara, after his two years of mandatory service in the military, Saidou's only ambition was to migrate and he saved money to buy an Italian visa, but was defrauded. With no money left, he chose to go by boat. Unfortunately, their boat did not make it due to rough seas, and it subsequently developed leakages. He is divorced and has recently re-married, and his wife is expecting their first baby. Together they share a single bedroom, which is sparsely furnished – a mattress on the floor, a small cupboard, on which is a small TV, and in the corner of the room a mat with some clothes and some in a bag. When it is time for meals to be served, another mat is rolled out and a basin of rice placed on it with everyone sitting on the mat around the basin. In light of the foregoing, it is evident that boat migration is not limited to the youths *per se*, but also involves older men, who all share a common motive – go to Europe and be able to improve the lives of their families and build an "étage" (storey building) house. The young and the old alike are breadwinners of their families, hence the burden of the livelihood of the family rests on them.

Not only are these activities taking place at the margins but those involved in boat migration (migrants) also consider themselves as marginalised and to them the margins have become what Das and Poole describe as "peripheries seen to form natural containers for people considered insufficiently socialized into the law, which may also be insufficiently socialized into the society as well"<sup>14</sup> (2004: 9).



*Repatriated migrants  
– right to left:  
Mohamed, Badara, and Seck*

## **Boat migration and margins**

In relation to other areas of the city and countryside, neighbourhoods inhabited by fishermen are quite distinct. The first impression one gets upon arrival is that of an old, abandoned, rundown neighbourhood of old colonial buildings (Guet Ndar and Tefesse-M'bour). But also the stench of rotting fish, roadside refuse combine with the smell of cooking to give a distinctive stench. Besides, these areas lack or are poorly equipped with schools and medical facilities and other State-run facilities.

As a result, these areas have become the perfect and specific margins for boat migration to thrive given that these areas in themselves are considered to be margins, hence constituting good points where power can be challenged and evaded, thus "providing potential means for escaping or resisting the State" (MacGaffey & Bazenguisa-Ganga, 2000: 79).

In this light, migrants and the principal facilitators of migration (conveyors, middlemen and captains) use these margins as a springboard for launching their migration to Europe. These areas have also become margins because of lack of police presence; the latter are weary of being assaulted (See also Bonnardel, 1992, and Camara, 1968). They make up for their absence by using spies whom they position within the community. The spies send information when a boat is about to leave, then the police or gendarmes arrive in large numbers, make swift arrests and retreat to their barracks. If the old adage that 'if men have learnt to shoot without missing, birds have learnt to fly without perching' is anything to go by, then the tactics adopted by the forces of law and order only make the margins mutate with regard to location in a continuous attempt to look for new margins.

In this regard, new margins further south such as Elinkine and Kafountain in the Casamance region have become the latest points of departure. Even within the outskirts of Dakar, new margins have cropped up, such as Tingue and Bargny in Rufisque. The stories of the conveyors speak for themselves, and all actors tell of how they evade the law.

Djiby is a 46-year-old fisherman in Saint Louis and married to two wives. It took a while for him to accept to grant an interview, and when he accepted, he requested that it should not be recorded. Before the interview, he tried to know about my research and

wondered whether I was not a spy for some organisation. Satisfied with my answer, he agreed that I could proceed with my questions. Throughout the interview, he was careful as to what he said, seen from the length of time he took to respond to a question. He is stoutly built and comes across as a devout Muslim who does not support women sharing the same space as men. This I understood from the extent to which he disapproved of my moving in men's circles. He was keen to know whether my spouse approved of or knew what my research entailed. He is very opinionated as he still believes fishermen can earn a living if they are economical with their resources like him instead of spending them on cultural feasts (christening, weddings and Tabaski). He also came across as a chauvinist as he insisted a woman's place is in the house to look after the children and prepare meals, and stated that he would not tolerate his spouse working outside the home.

In order to prepare the journey without police intervention and spies reporting to the police, Djiby moved to Tingue, a suburb in Rufisque, on the outskirts of Dakar. Here, he anchored the boat about 200 metres off the coast. All the supplies except fuel are brought in from Dakar by night, in order not to raise any suspicion in the neighbourhood, and taken directly to the boat at sea by smaller vessels. Once the provisions have been well arranged in the boat, the passengers are transported in like manner to the boat. Prior to their departure, conveyors lodge would-be migrants with trusted friends and family in return for a free seat in the boat for one of their relations. Once the captain sets off on the journey, he is in constant touch with the conveyor. Djiby says that when he can no longer get through to them, his assumption is that they have reached Spain given that in Mauritania and Morocco they still pick up network coverage. The conveyors and migrants have ingeniously devised opportunities to bend and stretch institutional surveillance, always outsmarting the government.

By contrast, Sane and friends moved to Nouakchott-Mauritania, which they consider a safe margin because it is not too closely patrolled, and the coast in Mauritania is vast, making it a perfect spot for them to steer clear of the police who are unable to patrol all of it. Besides, the distance from Nouakchott to Spain is shorter (3 days) hence a reduction in the expenditure and supplies of provision. The decision by most conveyors to move out of their usual loci is

underpinned by the fact that they are in search of a safe haven where arrests are not possible, and they refer to these areas as '*brousse*' (bush). Stationed in Nouakchott, Sane and friends found it easier to oscillate between Nouakchott and Saint Louis to recruit migrants. Those recruited from Senegal are transported across the border in groups of three to water down any suspicion and are kept in a rented room. According to Sane, migrants are often discreet in the search of a conveyor and come under the guise of a hawker. In Yarakh, I came across a similar disguise situation. I met a 'hawker' selling three T-shirts and a few secondhand trousers. He came specifically to find out if boats still depart from this area, while giving the impression that he was a hawker. Later, he was taken into a room and I was told that he had been directed to Kaffountine in the Casamance region from where boats leave.



*Repatriated migrants  
planning to leave  
for Mauritania*

Migrants and conveyors resist the impositions placed on them by the State, but they constantly seek innovative ways to contest them. This is because the points of departure around the outskirts of Dakar are no longer seen to be margins given how they have been infiltrated by spies and how frequently they are raided by police. For instance, neighbourhoods like Yarakh and Thiaroye-Sur-Mer were no longer considered margins because of police raids and the presence of vigilantes paid by the police to watch the neighbourhood and call when a boat was about to leave. This was the case with Libas whose boat never succeeded in leaving the shores of Yarakh

on all four attempts. The conveyors thus move to the creeks south of Senegal and to neighbouring countries like Mauritania, Guinea Conakry and The Gambia. The way the conveyors manoeuvre and the stories they narrate show how they perceive their actions as constituting resistance to oppressive State authority at local and global levels. Moreover, they see the State as a constraint on their aspirations and ambitions, hence it must be resisted by all means. This resistance was not only by migrants, but was by far championed by the conveyors and their allies – middlemen, who moved into the suburbs and to other countries where they perceive a laxity in surveillance and criminalisation. For instance, Djiby had to move from Saint Louis to Tingue, a village in the outskirts of Dakar, when it has not yet entered the records as a point of departure. Sane moved from Saint Louis to Nouakchott in Mauritania but comes back regularly to Saint Louis to recruit migrants and ferry them to Nouakchott.

*"We left Nouakchott because even though there is less control there than in Saint Louis, we get our passengers here in Senegal. We leave by car from here, but they don't leave in groups for fear of suspicion by people. They leave the same day, but separately, even in the same vehicle. When they arrive in Nouakchott, we rent a house for those from Senegal for a given period." (Saint Louis, 16/09/08).<sup>15</sup>*

For those who have established themselves as middlemen, the picture is quite stark as seen through the actions of Badara. In an excerpt from our interview, he told of how he operates in order to avoid the State. When questioned about this, as can be perceived from his tone, he felt jittery and was somehow uncomfortable and asked that I switch off the recorder for a while. Throughout the interview, there was this atmosphere of mistrust looming in the air, seen from his attitude and the way he responded to my questions most of the time by first posing a question.

*Q: Are you preparing for a journey now? (Présentement tu es entrain de préparer ton voyage?)*

*A. Who told you that before leaving I worked in priogues? I don't live here. I come here to work, and after that I return to Dakar. I need some cover. If they*

*know I'm ready, they'll come and arrest me. Some people have proposed that I talk about it but I refused. I am discreet about it. I have never been put in prison. The conveyor has made six months in prison. We have scheduled a journey. And we will leave from Casamance.*<sup>16</sup>

*Q: Where in Casamance ? ( Où en Casamance ?)*

*A. I can't say. It's in Casamance; that's all I can say. We have already bought a pirogue and it is in Casamance. We are waiting for advice from the marabout to tell us when we can leave. We are 49 at the moment.*"<sup>17</sup>

The margins thus have come to be synonymous with revolt and resistance – revolting against their exclusion and lack of government's support for the fish sector and tightening the issuance of visa by Europe, and to a resistance against the culture that preaches communal life as opposed to individual lifestyle. Concomitantly, the margins provide a soft spot for such resistance to unfold. Sall thinks that the government is being cynical by stopping migrants from going to Europe whilst its members also go to Europe to satisfy personal needs:

*"When Abdoulaye Wade needs money, does he not go to Europe; and then he refuses that we should leave."*<sup>18</sup>

To others, expressing their defiance and justifying their revolt, they maintain that

*"the wives of Ministers go to Europe to put to bed, do their shopping and their children attend schools in Europe; is that because Europe is good for them, and not for us?"*<sup>19</sup>

Others cannot comprehend why Europe closes its borders to them, and at the same time Europeans come in and out of their country as they see fit, and question the fairness of globalisation. However, what they fail to consider is that although the advent of globalisation is denoted by accelerated flows, it is also marked paradoxically by accelerated closures (Nyamnjoh, 2006). And the heavily guarded borders suggest that they are closed to Africans, and paradoxically, migration has been categorized and based on a selective process. In connection with this, Ferguson (2006: 14) argues that "globalisation has instead been a matter of highly selective

and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion”. As we shall see in chapter 6, these migrants have been seen more as a problem that must be dealt with.

*Returned migrant in the middle working as  
a beach cleaner for the city council while  
looking for a boat to migrate*



## Conclusion

The causes and forms of migration have changed over time, and the destinations are no longer based on colonial links or cultural ties as suggested by the migration systems, as we have seen. But one common factor links them together: they follow the pattern of a long-established culture of migration that continues to be deeply embedded in a tradition of migration. Events leading to boat migration have been building up, starting from the tough visa policies which means that would-be migrants are unable to get visas, let alone overstay the visa period as have often been the case; then there was the fencing of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla that led to the death of five migrants; and then the heavily guarded trans-Sahara route through Morocco.

Mindful of the fact that there is a possibility by sea the migrants resorted to leaving from the Coast of Senegal, especially as the fares from Nouakchott were quite high. Furthermore, the continuous



phone calls from successfully arrived migrants who tell of the ‘easy’ passage at sea and how they have been released to go into mainland Spain and their subsequent employment, earning what would never have been possible, are the last straw that leads to the escalation of boat migration. In addition, stories about the benevolence of the Spanish, the need for farm labour due to an increase in the ageing population, equally have a spiralling effect on those left behind:

*“They are kind, good-hearted. They could mine the sea; if people explode then no person will leave again, but they need us. They told us that themselves. The farms require strong people to work there. European children prefer football, the old people can no longer have children. They have told us: ‘You Senegalese, you are serious and we need you. You are hard-working. It is the governments that pose problems. France has a lot of immigrants, Italy has a lot too, but Spain and Portugal don’t have enough. France has developed with the help of immigrants, and it does not want other countries to develop also. The Spaniards told me so.’”<sup>20</sup>*

Perhaps if it were only these stories sending out the migrants, the scale would not have been so large. With parents and family in support of their children going by sea, the phenomenon is no doubt given an extra boost. As we have seen, the economic factor is seen as one of the underlying causes of boat migration. Most parents blame their sons’ departure on the high cost of fishing material and unemployment, and one of the parents whose son is in Spain confirms this in the following excerpt:

*“The equipment is expensive. The smallest engine of 8HP costs 800,000 CFA francs, 40 HP costs 1,850,000 CFA francs. Pirogues are also expensive. Before, with 100,000 CFA francs we could buy a pirogue. Today, you need at least 5,000,000 CFA francs for a pirogue. This accounts for the departures and inadequate resources (lack of resources) People are tired. It is difficult to find any comfort. The real reason for leaving is that people are tired and they can’t find any money. If you can’t find money, you look for it where it is easier to find. If they have jobs on the spot, they would not leave. You work the entire year, and you can’t solve a problem. That is why people go on exile. You then decide to leave and head for an unknown destination; you are indeed putting your life at risk, but there’s nothing else you can do.”<sup>21</sup>*

## Notes

1. As part of its new Pan-African policy, Al-Qadhafi started to welcome SSA to work in Libya in the spirit of Pan-African solidarity (Pliez 2002, and 2004a in De Haas 2007: 13).
2. Je suis pêcheur et je travaille à Nouadhibou. Un jour, on restait ensemble. Un ami m'informa que des Espagnols, des Marocains et des Mauritaniens font le trafic entre le Maroc et l'Espagne. Je lui répondis que je ne voulais pas y aller. Il me dit « ah bon ». on a discuté longtemps et un autre jour le Maure en personne est venu me voir. Il s'appelle Larousi, et l'Espagnol s'appelle Pepe. Il y avait des Guinéens, des Mauritaniens et même des Sénégalais et chacun a payé 2 500euros. J'ai emmené douze Togolais, trois Ghanéens et un Malien. En tout on était vingt trois. La pirogue était achetée par les Maures. Après on m'a payé pour amener ces gens en Espagne.

Q : Etant pêcheur, le Mauritanien t'a payé pour amener ces gens en Espagne ?

R : Ensemble avec l'Espagnol ils m'ont payé. Ils m'ont donné les informations nécessaires pour le trajet. C'était Alghero, Puer to Ventura etc. Pepe, Larousi Yahya, un Marocain, Chérif et Amar ont été tous ensemble dans une chambre. Ils m'ont remis un stylo, une feuille et une GPS. Ils m'ont montré sur la carte la position du Maroc et des Îles Canaries. Il y avait sept îles. La grande Canaria, Tenerife, Porto Ventura, Almeria, Alghero. Le vendredi on se prépara, prit la nourriture et les dispositions nécessaires. Le fait le départ le 04 Avril 2005 à minuit. Et on est arrivé le jeudi 11 à huit heures. Les Espagnols nous ont bien accueillis et après on nous a menés à Almeria et j'ai appelé Nouadhibou. J'ai appelé Larousi et ils ont construits deux autres pirogues. Ce sont les Espagnols, les Mauritaniens et les Marocains qui font le trafic. A partir de Layoun ils ont amené plus de trois cent personnes. Un jour j'ai appelé à Nouadhibou, un ami qui s'appelle Baye Seck Diola. Je lui fais savoir que j'ai commencé à travailler et que je gagnais de l'argent.

J'ai appelé un autre ami qui m'a demandé de le rejoindre à Pamplona, en Espagne. Je suis resté deux jours et Larousi m'a appelé pour me dire de rester à Almeria. Un ami Espagnol devait venir m'aider. Il a insisté qu'un petit frère à Pepe devait venir m'aider à trouver du travail. Avril, Mai, même Juillet je suis resté à Almeria. Le 24 Juillet j'étais au travail quand il m'a appelé pour une rencontre dans un restaurant le lendemain. J'ai discuté avec le frère de Larousi qui m'invite de venir avec lui à Lazarote. Le premier Août 2005, on est arrivé à Lazarote. Il

m'hébergea. « Tranquilo, aqui trabajo mucho » il me rassura. On travaillait en réseau. Il me proposa de commencer le travail le soir et je demandai quel travail. L'embarcation du Maroc a subi beaucoup de morts. Ils m'ont donné une pirogue et un moteur de 75 chevaux Yamaha. A dix heures je devais transporter des gens. On s'accorda sur le prix de 3000euros pour chaque voyage. Un Sénégalais du nom de Yankhoba Seck m'appela pour venir les secourir. Ils étaient en difficulté en pleine mer et 19 parmi 350 passagers moururent.

On me paya 3000euros pour mon premier voyage du 06 Août 2005. (Saint Louis; 30/07/08)

3. « Il est largement établi que le trafic des migrants clandestins s'est développé et continue toujours à prospérer grâce à un vaste réseau de corruption. La complicité de certaines autorités administratives est la condition nécessaire au développement de ce type de trafic d'êtres humains. »
4. « C'est très difficile à dormir car ton portable sonne 24/24, et parce que le phénomène n'était pas contrôlé, il y avait trop de magouille du côté policiers qui te demandent de l'argent et aussi de prendre les membres de leur famille gratuit. »
5. « Nous recrutons des gens mais on le fait en douceur et pas en force. Nous te demandons si tu veux partir en Espagne, si tu étais au courant des pirogues qui partent ? Si tu es un guerrier tu te décides. Tu veux partir nous te demandons 400.000 CFA francs. Tu peux négocier jusqu'à 350.000 CFA francs et on s'accorde sur le prix. Nous t'encourageons et te remontons la morale, et ceci te donne de la confiance. Tu peux garder l'argent jusqu'au moment du départ et tu peux venir avec des amis. Avant le jour de départ tu dois confirmer à l'avance en nous laissant ton numéro de téléphone. C'est seulement au dernier moment qu'on précisera le lieu et l'heure de départ. »
6. « Le propriétaire ne pourra pas organiser sans moi. Je suis le cerveau mais c'est lui qui détient les moyens. »
7. « Il y avait 74 personnes. Il y avait 9 mineurs, il y avait 12 Gambiens. Parmi les mineurs, il y avait un fils de ma grande sœur et deux fils de mon grand frère, les autres étaient dans la pirogue en cachette. C'est en pleine mer que je les ai vus. »
8. « Ils sont restés en Espagne. On ne refoule pas les mineurs. Actuellement ils sont dans de bonnes conditions. Ils me téléphonent pour me saluer et me remercier. Souvent les fils de mon grand frère m'envoient 15.000 ou 20.000 franc. »

9. Story told by Mohammed, my research guide in Dakar, who was on the same boat with the brothers.
10. « Quand vous êtes aîné de famille, la débrouille est un devoir dont le seul fondement est le désir de faire vivre la famille. »
11. « Un certain Ousseynon, qui est plus âgé que moi est actuellement en Espagne. Donc le phénomène ne concerne pas simplement les jeunes, il y a des vieux qui partent. »
12. « J'en connais 5. Les 4 sont arrivés mais le cinquième qui s'appelait Talla est décédé. Un autre Doudou Fall n'est pas arrivé. »
13. « Les premiers passeurs sont des capitaines de pirogues à la retraite et ayant une grande expérience des traverses maritimes. »
14. My addition in italics.
15. « On a quitté Nouakchott parce que le control est moins sévère qu'ici à Saint Louis, mais nous recrutons les gens ici au Sénégal. On quitte ici par la voiture, mais ils ne vont pas parti en groupe si non les gens vont les soupçonner. Ils vont parti le meme jour mais en order disperser, même pas dans la mêm vioture. Arriver à Nouakchott on loue une maison pour les gens qui viennent de Sénégal pour un lapse de temps. »
16. Qui vous a dit qu'avant de partir je travaillais dans les pirogues ? je n'habite pas ici. Je viens faire mon travail, après je rentre à Dakar. J'ai besoin d'une couverture. S'ils savent que je suis prêt ils peuvent venir m'arrêter. Certains m'ont proposé d'en parler mais j'ai refusé. Je le fais discrètement. Je ne suis jamais entré en prison. Le propriétaire a fait six mois de prison avant de sortir. On a programmé un voyage. Et on prendra le départ en Casamance.
17. Je ne peux pas le dire. C'est en Casamance et c'est tout que je peux vous dire. On a déjà acheté une pirogue et elle est en Casamance. On doit attendre les indications du marabout pour nous conseiller quel jour de la semaine on doit partir. On est pour l'instant 49 personnes.
18. « *Abdoulaye Wade quand il veut de l'argent, n'est ce pas il part en Europe pour chercher ! Et nous, il refuse pour qu'on part. »*
19. « Les épouses des ministres partent en Europe pour avoir leurs enfants, pour faire des courses, et leurs enfants frequentent dans les meilleurs école en Europe, c'est parce ce que l'Europe est bon pour eux et non pour nous ? »

20. « Ils sont gentils, ils ont de bons cœurs. Ils pouvaient miner les mers, si les gens explosent, personne ne partira plus jamais, mais ils ont besoin de nous. Ils nous l'ont proprement dit. Ils nous l'ont fait savoir. Les champs ont besoins de braves gens pour y travailler. Les enfants Européens préfèrent le football, les vieillards ne font plus d'enfants. Ils nous l'ont dit « vous les Sénégalais, vous êtes sérieux et on a besoin de vous. Tu travailles sans entraves. C'est au niveau du gouvernement que les problèmes se posent. La France a beaucoup d'immigrés, l'Italie en a beaucoup également mais l'Espagne et le Portugal n'en n'ont pas assez. La France s'est développée grâce aux immigrés, et elle ne veut pas que les autres pays avancent comme elle. Les Espagnols me l'ont dit. »
21. « Les matériels sont plus chers. La plus petite machine coûte 800.000 francs de 8 chevaux. 40 chevaux 1.850.000 francs. La pirogue est chère aussi. Avant avec 100.000 francs CFA on peut acheter une pirogue. Maintenant tu payes au moins 5.000.000 francs pour une pirogue.

Ce qui explique le départ, l'insuffisance des moyens (manque des moyens). Les gens se fatiguent. Il est difficile de trouver de réconfort. La véritable raison d'un départ, c'est quand tu te fatigues et tu ne peux trouver de l'argent. Si tu ne peux rien trouver, tu pars chercher ailleurs où c'est mieux. S'ils avaient trouvé du travail sur place, ils ne partiraient pas. Tu travailles toute une année, tu ne peux régler aucun problème. C'est ce qui explique l'exil. Tu empruntes le chemin pour une destination incertaine, c'est véritablement risquer sa vie cela, mais on ne peut rien faire. »



#### Introduction

Fishing in Senegal involves mainly the Guet Ndariens and the Lebou communities. These groups of people started fishing as far back as pre-colonial times (Bonnardel, 1992), when they migrated extensively in coastal West Africa, from Mauritania to Guinea Conakry/Bissau, Liberia to Sierra Leone and even to Benin, to seek new opportunities rather than to escape misery. Migration has been part and parcel of their livelihood, and at times they settle when they perceive the new location is resourceful. This explains the high numbers of Guet Ndariens in Nouakchott and Nouadibour (Mauritania) and Banjul – The Gambia.

In addition, they migrate to participate in the annual up-welling pattern in the Gulf of Guinea, during which they follow the migratory pattern of the fish (Overà, 2005). In other words, they are engaged in seasonal migration that is planned according to the migratory movements of the fish. But more importantly, migrants are seen as having come of age – a rite of passage marking the start of a full-blown career and the ability to captain a pirogue. At the centre of their migratory movements is their relationship with the *marabouts*.

The fishers strongly believe in the intervention of the *marabouts* for their success and safety at sea: indeed, it is believed that fishing would not be successful if a *marabout* were not consulted. This thus accounts for the annual sacrifices and prayers led by a *marabout* on the banks of the river and shores of the sea in Saint Louis at the start of every fishing season (see also Bonnardel, 1992). Individually, the fishers seek the blessings and protection of the *marabout*, and the latter in turn asks for sacrifices to be offered in order to ensure a good catch.

Rapid changes in lifestyle and a change in taste for consumer goods among the fishers seem to be another reason for boat migration. Perhaps this could also be explained from the position of the fish

they have always sought after – ‘yaboy’ and ‘thiouf’<sup>1</sup> which is used as a metaphor to denote wealth and social standing (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The notion of ‘yaboy’ is widely used to refer to men, and those who undertake the journey by sea are the ‘yaboys’. This ultimate risky journey is in the attempt to graduate from the ‘yaboy’ that they have been reduced to, to become the social human ‘thiouf’. The sea journey, we may argue, is a way to fish their way to social mobility – negotiating their way into visibility as ‘*venant d'Italie*’ [coming from Italy]. The focus of this chapter therefore is: why have the fishers given up all this long-standing tradition of fishing in favour of boat migration? Why do they make up the bulk of the migrants? And why is their participation a driving force for boat migration to thrive? How have their longstanding relationships with the *marabouts* been used to facilitate boat migration?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I address the fishery economy perspective and its implications for boat migration. This chapter details the economic and political developments that have provided openings for this group of people to be at the centre of boat migration, both as facilitators and as migrants. In this chapter, the relationship between fishing in the past and the present will be highlighted. Emphasis will also be laid on the changes that have taken place in between and led to a large portion of the current generation of fishermen abandoning the only job they know for ‘greener pastures’.

I begin with an overview of the fishing economy in the past, and then I go on to detail the present state of the fishery economy and give account of how the present scenario is beset with problems, ranging from government policies and inadequate education on fishing, especially what species and size to fish and not to fish. And lastly, I look at the effects of boat migration on the fishing sector and how the repatriated migrants have developed lukewarm attitudes towards returning to fishing. What repercussion has this got on the industry as a whole and on the lives of the migrants?

### **Overview of the fishing economy**

Prior to and during the colonial era, fishing was mainly artisanal, using smaller wooden fishing boats without engines. Furthermore, this period was marked by abundant fish, with fishermen not having



to go fishing for days or weeks before they eke a living as is the case today. From 1953, there was a great revolution in the fishing sector due to the shift from smaller-sized boats to larger ones, and with funds from the FAO, fishers were subsidized to purchase engines. This meant that bigger boats were constructed and the length of boats increased from 4 to 5 metre boats that used to carry a maximum of four persons to larger ones of 12 to 15 metres in length with a maximum capacity of some fifteen to twenty persons respectively. This meant that fishers could go further into the ocean to areas that were formerly considered uncharted waters, thus leading to overexploitation. Demba says it all:

*“At that time, it was pleasant and good, because fishing provided a livelihood, there were not enough fishers, there were no pirogues and the population was low. Today, Senegal has a population of more than 11 million inhabitants, and therefore there is a lot of pressure on the fish. Fishing is no longer a dependable livelihood, because fish production is inadequate. Our grandparents and fathers lived on farming, and therefore had two different occupations – fishing and farming. There were not enough people; there were no engines or large pirogues. But today, there is overfishing because the pirogues then were six or seven metres long, with no engines, and fishers went fishing with sails and packets. This is not the case today because the pirogues are fairly large and some of them are even 25 metres long and have two engines of 60 HP. The big engine and large pirogue have left us with very serious problems ... we don't have access to the world market, and the domestic market is saturated. If a fisher comes back with 400 or 500 cases of fish and there are inadequate conservation facilities or wholesalers, it will be catastrophic for him; that is why fishing can no longer provide a dependable livelihood and our youths are leaving for Spain.”* (Interview, Saint Louis: 22/10/08) (see also Sall & Morand, 2008: 35; Bonnardel, 1992: 231).<sup>2</sup>

Fall confirms this tremendous increase in the number of fishing pirogues: “from 7,000 pirogues towards the end of the 90s, the fleet today stands at 13,000 pirogues, which is double the number in less than 10 years ...” (2006: 98).<sup>3</sup>

Demba is 59 years of age (but looks far too old for his age). He is married to three wives and has seventeen children and eight grandchildren, all of whom live in a four-bedroom house of about

10 square metres. To date, he is unable to refurbish it or construct a new one. None of his children received any formal education, but he is determined to make a difference with his grandchildren, even if it means begging to send them to school, as he puts it. He is stout with discoloured teeth and very articulate. He is a member of the Economic and Social Council of Saint Louis. He has very strong opinions about the government's position with regard to fishing, and thinks that it is because of the government's lack of interest in this sector that they are facing such problems.

Attesting to Demba's remarks, another fisher recounts how fishing in the past was quite adequate for their subsistence and they were very contented with it. Compared to the present he says:

*"We did not use engines; we paddled our boats. The fish we used to catch are no longer there. We shared our catch, and we always took some home to our families and children. Today, the fish stock has diminished; indeed, there's hardly any. We now have to go right to Conakry to find fish, or to Nouadhibou. That wasn't the case in the past. We left in the morning, and always came back in the evening. Today, fishers stay more than 10 days at sea."* (Saint Louis, 22/10/08)<sup>4</sup>

From these accounts by the fishers, we get to understand how 'lucrative' fishing in the past was, compared to the circumstances under which they are fishing at present. This may probably explain the high rate of dissatisfaction among the fishers and their subsequently involvement in boat migration.

For his part, Abdou Salam Fall likens the sea to 'blue gold', and notes that it comes as manna from heaven, whereby fish products constitute strategic resources for Senegal given that the country has no mineral resources; if the resources are well harnessed, they will yield much more. With a contribution of thirty percent to the national budget, fishing remains the leading export (Fall, 2006: 92-93). But today, this sector is fast becoming deserted due to the same changes in technology – motorised boats, which helped the fishermen to have easy access further into the sea, are now leading to over-exploitation.

In the following excerpt by Gora, he gives detailed accounts of fishing in the past and its present state. First, meet Gora. He is 69 years old and a retired fisherman. He lives in the newly created

neighbourhood of Hydrobase, in an uncompleted cement block house, which by any means is better off than the dwellings of most of the families we visited at Guet Ndar and Ndar Tout. A polygamist with two wives, Gora has twelve children and none has received any formal education beyond Koranic school. With the first wife, whom I met, he has six children – five males and one female; all of them are married, and two together with their spouses are living with him. All the males are fishermen using the family's two boats and two engines to fish. Two of his sons fish in Mauritania, while the other two fish in Saint Louis. Gora is a very tall, slim man, and is happy to talk about his past and about his family; he is soft-spoken with a sense of humour and is endowed with knowledge about the past and the present, but also politely opinionated. After ten o'clock in the morning, when he is back from Diamalaye (where boats anchor with fish), he lies outside on a mat either sleeping or studying the Koran until when lunch is served. As from four o'clock, he goes to Guet Ndar to meet friends where they spend the evening playing chess.

*"In 1952, there was, in this building (pointing opposite his house), a certain Mr. Arnaud who wanted to introduce fishing engines. Fishing was so easy and enjoyable that our fathers and grandfathers opposed the introduction of the engine. At that time, a litre of petrol cost 30 francs. In 1968 when I bought an 18 HP engine, it cost 105,000 francs. The fish has moved far, right to Mauritania; you can catch them only in Mauritania. And a litre of petrol today costs 580 francs – a 40 HP engine costs 1,080,000 francs, a 15 HP engine costs 1,050,000 CFA francs, and the equipment has changed. The government no longer gives us, the fishers of Guet Ndar, any assistance. If the government gave us assistance, things would be much less difficult. But that is not the case. At that time, after the dry season, in July, August and September, we went out to sea with less food. We remained at sea for less than four hours. Fish was abundant and came with the rainy season: "feuten", "sikanen", and "sipakh" all came together during the colonization; there were no destructive boats. The destructive boats belong to Senegal. The fish came with other species. Since the latter have been destroyed, we no longer see fish. This is due to the governments which take bad decisions. Up to today Arnaud had predicted the present situation; he felt we should select the species to be caught. We no longer see gold fish. This is due to intensive fishing, and the government does not help us in any way. We often stay at sea in Mauritania for 4 to 5 days. There is nothing in our sea. They have protected and maintained their seas. In Senegal, we don't protect anything; we let the boats destroy them."*<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to compare the monetary value of the past to that of the present:

*“In the past, there wasn’t enough money, but its value was high. In 1968, when I got married, a kilogramme of rice cost 30 francs, and half a litre of oil 30 francs. With 5,000 francs one could meet all expenses for more than one month. But now, 100,000 francs are not enough to cover expenses for the month. There is much more money now, but the value has reduced. In the past, a kilogramme of sugar cost 130 francs and a kilogramme of rice 30 francs, and a litre of oil 30 francs. I was in the house with my son’s wife and grandson, and each day I spent 3,500 francs. When the entire family was in the house, I spent 6,000 francs per day.”* (Interview, Saint Louis: 22/10/08)<sup>6</sup>



*Returned piroque from fishing*

Gora is lamenting the drastic changes that have set in, and his story also evokes the current degradation of this sector and points an accusing finger at the government for its negligence and a lack of adequate measures to regulate fishing. Re-echoing Gora’s cry, Abdou Salam Fall (2006: 95) maintains that:

*Senegalese fishery resources suffer from the degradation ... it could be said that the degradation is linked to the intensification and industrialization of fishing, as well as basing fishing on commercial considerations with, in particular, an agreement in 1979 between the European Union and Senegal. This gives a historical background to the degradation of fishery resources.”<sup>7</sup>*

From the life histories, it can be seen that the older fishermen all talk with nostalgia about the past – a glorious past that was characterised by abundance and tranquillity. Corroborating the above remarks, another elderly fisherman maintains that:

*“When we were young fishermen, many things in the sea were free. The resources were more accessible; there were more opportunities. But now to find fish, you can be for up to ten days at sea. And with a lot of risks, because if the Mauritians catch us, they confiscate our pirogues and engines. My pirogue and engine were confiscated and kept in Mauritania for one year. This is where the difference lies. In the past, we went out fishing and came back early.”* (Saint Louis, 13/10/08).<sup>8</sup>

All the elderly fishermen we talked to are nostalgic about the past, how it was full of abundance and promising, and they also made reference to the Frenchman – Arnaud – who cautioned them against the adverse effects the engines would have on fishing<sup>9</sup> and advised them about the danger of over exploitation. But, as they put it, ‘we thought the ocean would never dry up of fish stocks, and we did not take him seriously, hence we saw no need to send our children to school as fishing was quite profitable then, and besides there was no other job to engage in’. My findings dovetail with that by Bonnardel (1992: 226), who notes that:

*“Between the world wars until independence, Saint Louis was the leading fishing centre of the centre, and in the town fishing was, in addition to handicraft, the only commercial productive activity ... however, since the 1960s, among the pirogue fishing centres in Senegal, Guet Ndar declined doubly in terms of the volume of fish caught, which stagnated at 8,000 to 10,000 tonnes per year, and in terms of the significant decline in national production for the town.”<sup>10</sup>*

This loss and depletion in stocks would probably explain why the inhabitants of Saint Louis and particularly the fishermen (the Guet Ndariens) were actively involved in boat migration and this equally confirms Fall’s (Ibid) findings that the degradation of fish stock is anchored in the historical process, and probably to the present globalisation phenomenon that requires African markets and industries to open up to Europe and Asia. The accessibility of Senegal’s waters to foreign boats/trawlers means that artisanal fishery no longer occupies the privileged position it used to vis à vis industrial fishing, thereby sidelining and threatening their profession and ‘deterritorialising’ the function of the State over its territorial waters.



*Sall, four times repatriated from Spain, one of his boats left from this location*

Fishing is the only job they master and over the years, since the 1950s, they have practised seasonal migration following the seasons and regions that fish migrate to. This means that the fishers would migrate as far as Guinea Bissau/Conakry, Liberia, Sierra-Leone and

Mauritania, while others do the rounds within the country. They follow the migratory process of the fish as they move from Kayar to M'bour and to Joal for six months (October-March), while others move southwards to the Casamance region from April to September. Given that migration has been and still is part and parcel of their fishing culture, migrating to Spain was more like going fishing, but this time fishing for a better future.

### **The role of the fishermen and their involvement in boat migration**

This cycle has continued to the present with the current generation of fishermen even going further afield with larger fishing boats that enter into a verbal agreement with about ten pirogues with a carrying capacity of five to six persons. The pirogues are taken into the boat and its crew and are offloaded at the place of fishing.<sup>11</sup> For a period of three months, these fishermen fish for this boat with each catch being weighed at the end of the day. At the end of the season, they are paid and taken back to the port of departure. In one way or the other, the lives of the fishermen are marked by a high degree of mobility. Spending three months at sea or going to Sierra-Leone, Monrovia and neighbouring countries such as The Gambia, Guinea Bissau/Conakry where they spend weeks (see also Sall & Morand, 2008: 36), have made them feel they have domesticated the sea. They have also come to realise that the sea is not productive and cannot guarantee their livelihood. Diallo (once a migrant himself) concisely describes the situation:

*“Clandestine migration is due to the fact that fishing is no longer profitable. It can no longer guarantee anything for the youths. In the past, fishermen could not understand why some people become tourist guides. For them, the normal thing was to go fishing in the sea. It was a culture for them. When a proposal was made to some of them to go to Europe, their parents refused. Today, it is these very parents who sell their lands and property to enable their children to go to Europe in pirogues. This is the contrast. People have always evolved in the fishing sector. Those who were forcing the youths to remain in the village no longer do so. There is no hope in fishing these days. For them, it is time to break with this activity that they have always known since the time of their great grandparents. Today, they are ready to divorce with the trade. For them, fishing can no longer*

*guarantee a livelihood. There has been a deterioration, loss of values in fishing. This is accepted by everyone. Fishing once gave youths a good livelihood. That's enough. There have been changes. Fishing is no longer what it used to be.”* (Kayar, 05/11/08).<sup>12</sup>



*Exorbitant fishing with no market for it*

Diallo's remarks not only show how bad the fishing sector had degraded but also show a u-turn in mentality about migration among parents who are ready to give up everything to ensure that their sons go to Spain. This remark is further corroborated by Gora who holds that:

*“The sea on which people laid their hopes no longer has fish. You really have to work and take care of your parents, but the sea no longer has any fish. That is why youths resort to clandestine migration. The government had promised to create safe areas in the sea. These areas would be places where fish can reproduce, but everything has been destroyed. The sea has been destroyed.”* (Saint Louis, 14/10/08).<sup>13</sup>

Hence when boat migration started, needless to say, the distance was far beyond what they have been used to covering. Having had the reputation of conquerors of the sea, enjoyed especially by



fishermen from Guet Ndar, it was difficult for them not to be part of the process. First, not only were their services needed, but all the accessories also needed to reach Spain could only be operated by them – the boat, engine, global positioning system (GPS), and compass. Also, it was a process that fed upon itself, as those ready to travel relied on those who had gone ahead for all that is required to ensure a smooth journey. They were the only ones who have mastered the trajectory. For once, they were proud to be fishermen as their services were in high demand. Given the lack of fish stocks (see below), boat migration was seen by most as manna from heaven, a means to escape long hours/days of work for little income and to improve one's livelihood. From every indication, it was an opportunity they could not afford to miss given how long they had dreamed of going to Europe, as many informants indicated. The exploitation of this avenue shows clearly how going to Europe had been a long standing aspiration for most people, who lacked the means to pursue it given the restrictions on issuing visas.

By and large, the heydays of fishing seem to be over as all informants – old and young- complain of lack of resources and the high costs incurred in fishing, costs they are not sure to recover at the end of the catch. Admitting that boat migration brought together migrants from far and wide, the fishing communities in Thiaroye and Yarakh on the outskirts of Dakar, Guet Ndar in Saint Louis, Tefesse in Mbour and in Kayar were amongst the hardest hit locations when this phenomenon was at its height. This can be understood from the perspective that the entire journey is organised within the territory they have mastered so well; they are therefore used to the trajectory and thus able to play a leading role in promoting and maintaining its continuity. Testifying to this, Gora believes that it is their knowledge of the sea route to Spain that has put them at the fore of boat migration: “We know the way better than they. We are more familiar with the sea and the way to take. Even in school, pupils are ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>. In our ranking, we are the 1<sup>st</sup>, and they are 4<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>14</sup>

As may be recalled from Chapter Two, the main actors (conveyor, middlemen, and sea farers) involved in this process are all fishermen, but so are the passengers. In their edited volume “*Enjeux de l’émigration au Sénégal*” students of journalism at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop

of Dakar affirm that of the repatriated migrants, 38 percent are artisanal fishermen, with a similar percentage in Spain (2007: 23). Similarly, another repatriated migrant shares this view, but maintains that if migrants were not repatriated, the effects on fishing would have been even worse given how many were released into mainland Spain. But we should guard against perceiving these fishermen as people who had given up on their profession in anticipation of going to Europe. Rather, the opportunity presented itself and the circumstances they found themselves in forced them to embark on such a perilous journey. As testified by one informant "We really want to remain and work for our country, but we have no opportunities. I have been a fisherman from birth and I know nothing else but fishing, but today fishing can no longer give me a livelihood."<sup>15</sup>



*Fish abandoned by the beach*

According to most fishers, migration to Europe has never captured their attention; rather, it is a thing for the farmers in the Louga, Diourbel, Touba and the Futa regions who suffered heavy losses due to continuous droughts, but having suffered a similar fate, they have resorted to migration.

### **Exorbitant cost of fishing and cost of materials**

As mentioned previously, fish products constitute a strategic resource for Senegal given its lack of mineral resources and fishing has been able to impose itself as the dominant economic activity in Senegal. But of late, this vibrant economic activity and those involved have been faced with numerous challenges including the high costs incurred prior to going out fishing. All fishermen complain of the very high costs they have to deal with before setting out to sea, and are often sceptical as to whether the gains would offset the costs. But quite often, they experience a loss. 70 years old Moumar shares a similar concern: “A pirogue that transports 300 bags of ice, and as many litres of petrol. To recover all this money is very difficult. Very often, we buy up to eighteen 60-litre containers of petrol. We work a lot, but gain very little in return.”<sup>16</sup>

The following account by the fishermen explains just how uncertain the nature of their job is, with regard to preparations and costs incurred towards going out for fishing.

|                                                      |                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 100 bags of ice at 1,300 CFA francs a bag            | 130,000 CFA francs                 |
| 23 60 litre-containers of fuel at 600 francs a litre | 828,000 CFA francs                 |
| Sardines as bait                                     | 60,000 CFA francs                  |
| Food and provisions                                  | 100,000 CFA francs                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                         | <b>1,118,000 CFA francs</b>        |
|                                                      | <b>(Approximately 1,700 Euros)</b> |

This estimate is for a fifteen-day trip, implying that the cost will vary depending on the number of days spent at sea.

According to the fishers, it is not often that luck strikes for them to have a good catch, and when they do, they might sell their catch for 1.5 million to 2 million CFA francs, and when the total expenses are deducted, they are left with 382,000 CFA francs under this scenario. This amount is shared among the total number of persons who went fishing (the boat is included as a cost), while the engine takes a double share. In this scenario, we are looking at a total of 15 persons, and then adding one share for the boat, plus double shares for the engine and the net. This comes up to a total of 20

shares. When the net profit is divided by the total number, it leaves each person with about 19,000 CFA francs. This amount is earned after fifteen days of fishing. It should be noted that the share for the boat, engine and net goes to the owner of the boat. On the other hand, there are times when they come back empty handed or still times when they come with far too much than can be sold, and are forced to abandon (bury) their catch on the shore. This was a common sight in Kayar and M'bour.



*Due to excess fish, Mareyeur buy below the cost price of fishing*

In the face of these challenges, the fishermen also complain of the difficulty the job entails, and are unable to compete with the fishing trawlers which are able to work during light storms, whereas they cannot. But also, they feel that if the price of fuel could be subsidized, it would help alleviate their burden. As testified by this informant, “I was born on 13/11/1964 ; fishing is difficult ; you go out for fifteen days at sea, you sleep there, it rains, it is windy ; indeed, it is difficult to be at sea.” (Interview with Modou, Saint Louis: 14/10/08).<sup>17</sup>

Modou is 45 years old and a retired fisherman in Saint Louis, married to two wives – one in Dakar and one in Saint Louis. He began fishing in 1982. His late entry into fishing is explained by the fact that he was forced by his mother to go to school which according to him, he managed to do, but he was envious of his friends who

were full-time fishermen and how much they earned on a daily basis. On completing primary school, he immediately joined his friends in fishing. He has seriously discoloured teeth and is small of build, and since retiring from fishing he does nothing concrete for a living and depends largely on his siblings for remittances from Spain. He is not really articulate in French, but is able to put across his message, very inquisitive, but a jovial person to talk to as he is full of humour. He shares a single well-furnished<sup>18</sup> bedroom with his wife and their younger son. Because he wants the elder son to get a good education, he has sent him to live with his uncle, who is a teacher, away from the fishers, so he can pursue his studies quietly.

As mentioned earlier, most of these fishers have been nursing hopes of migrating to Europe, but lack the means to realise these dreams. Modou is one of those who took advantage of the boat migration process, for he wasted no time in sending his brothers to Spain. As a conveyor, he was able to send three of his four brothers to Spain, and now his livelihood depends on his brothers and friends whom he sent to Spain.

When the boat migration phenomenon started, the fishermen saw themselves not only as masters of the sea, but also as people who had tamed it to the level where they could brave all the dangers and risks involved. To them, this was a period to make their dreams come true, as increasingly they have come to realise that the sea is no longer as productive as it used to be, and all attempts at living off the only job they master is proving difficult. The high cost of fishing is also a cause for concern to the elderly fishermen, as this means that their sons might not be independent in time to start a family, given that they marry as young as 20 years for the men and 13 years for the women. This has a repercussion on the continuity of their profession, for the sons have to take over fishing and bring in income to the family.

Besides the costs incurred in preparation towards going out for fishing, the cost of fishing materials has doubled and most families see their livelihood gradually slipping away from them because they cannot afford to replace old nets, boat and other materials. They are resigned to using cheap, ineffective and banned materials such as the nylon net. A new boat would cost between one million CFA francs and seven million CFA francs. This is what Moumar, the 70-year old man, has to say with regard to this:

*“The engine costs 2,500,000 CFA francs, the pirogue 5 million CFA francs, the nets between 5 and 8 million. All the equipment is needed as a whole, and we do not have the resources. We are afraid of the government; they are more educated than us in French; they can fool you and take your money. That is what happens to us these days. Before giving us the smallest loan, they ask for our house documents. If they lend us 15 million francs, we can buy a pirogue with 10 million francs.”<sup>19</sup>*

This high cost of material is a serious impediment to the fishermen securing new equipment, and as shown by Moumar, the mistrust they have towards the government further compounds their situation and we can understand why they seem to direct their frustrations at the government for not doing enough to help the fishing sector despite the income it generates for the government.



*Preparations towards fishing: a hundred bags of ice for storage and cooking utensils*

Fishing is a family business (see also Bonnardel, 1992; Camara, 1968), and in the course of this research I noted that most of those who engaged in boat migration were from families that no longer own boats, or have just one with too many persons depending on it, or a boat in a very bad state of repair that needs to be replaced. To

them, going to Europe would enable them to earn enough money to secure new fishing equipment for the family, while some of them gambled with the only life line of the family by using the lone boat owned by the family. Some succeeded, but others did not. This notwithstanding, there were also men from wealthy fishing families (with three boats and above plus engines and nets) who chose to migrate as well. To this group of persons, personal success was their driving force, and they did not want to be associated with the achievements of their parents.

Perhaps if they were confronted only with the high cost of preparing for fishing without the high cost and the lack of material, this would not have led to the mass exodus. But high costs and lack of resources seem to be a recipe for migration.

### **Lack of resources**

As much as some fishermen would still want to make do with such fishing conditions, their profession is rocked by a dwindling fish stock in Senegal's waters. Sall & Morand (2008) and Fall (2006) opine that this shortage and degradation of resources is mainly due to over-exploitation and industrialisation of fishing, which is directly linked to the fishing agreement signed with the European Union (EU). In view of these challenges, the major worries of these fishermen are that they have to compete with the fishing trawlers which are able to work during storms and can go further into the ocean, and besides, are licensed to fish in the same area if they are registered as Senegalese boats. As a result of the dwindling resources, the fishermen are obliged to go farther into the ocean to neighbouring countries like Guinea Conakry/Bissau, Liberia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Mauritania to fish, resulting in higher costs. They blame the lack of fish on the agreement signed between the Government of Senegal and the EU. According to Demba: "... the result is that following the French cooperation, the much talked-about French agreement has not helped to solve our problems; the European Union came to Senegal to buy all our fish and sell it in Europe."<sup>20</sup> And I posed the question:

*Q: Was the agreement for the EU and France to come and fish here or only to come and buy fish?*

*A: They signed agreements with the Government; they proposed to give the Government some money so as to fish off our coasts. (Saint Louis, 22/10/08).<sup>21</sup>*

According to Demba, this lack of fish stocks is equally as a result of the Government's inability to diversify fishing activities as was done by his parents and grandparents in the past, and everyone believes the sea never runs out of stock. He went on to say that the Government should actively encourage agriculture among the fishermen such that during periods of gestation they can turn to the soil or do both simultaneously. This would reduce the rate of exploitation, given that fishermen cannot respect the gestation period due to lack of other means of income.

For his part, Modou reiterated the fact that another agreement with the Koreans and Chinese by the former Head of State Abdou Diouf has further exacerbated the situation: "there is no fish because Abdou Diouf's Government gave fishing licences to Chinese and Koreans. The industrial boats swept off all the fish we had here in Senegal." (Saint Louis, 14/10/08).<sup>22</sup>

Despite the mixed-up facts as to who exactly signed the protocol agreement, they are not far from it as their testimonies are equally supported by Abdou Salam Fall who holds that: "[t]he Senegalese fishery resources are deteriorating. This is evident in various aspects ... of which the agreement signed in 1979 between the European Union and Senegal remains a significant event." (Fall, 2006: 95).<sup>23</sup> Apart from this agreement, he also identifies other aspects that have led to the degradation of fish, such as political, institutional, economic, anthropological and demographic aspects (Fall, 2006: 97-100). Whilst acknowledging these causes, it is important to note that they are merely the tip of the iceberg because the European boats that enter Senegalese waters do so for a period of three months to fish for tuna when it is the season.

This depletion of stocks, I believe, is more as a result of the lack of respect for the gestation period and of fishing in areas reserved for gestation, as indicated by most fishers concerning their colleagues with bigger boats. It should be recalled that the number of boats and the population of fishermen have increased tremendously compared to the 1950s, leading to a large number of persons competing for few resources. The corollary is over-exploitation, and worse still, not allowing time for the stocks to mature, fishing out tiny species that cannot be consumed and that end up being abandoned on the beach. This comes back to the absence of sustained monitoring of the coast and diversification



of activities by the fishers. When this issue is raised with repatriated migrants, they make it no secret that the main cause of their problem is bad policies implemented by the Government (See Chapter Seven).

The early years of fishing, as attested by the older fishers, were a bonanza in fish stocks. Even the late entries like Modou still confirm this. Modou looks back with nostalgia to the early years when he started fishing. Although he is relatively new to fishing, he still believes that compared to when he started fishing, there is now a serious shortage in stocks.

*“In 1982, fishing gave a lot of money, and there was a lot of fish. When we went fishing, we did not spend the night at sea. We left in the morning and came back in the evening, and there was a lot of fish. Now, we stay at sea for fifteen or ten days. But in 1982, the value of fish was not high; you could sell a lot of fish for 25,000 CFA francs. But then, money had a high value at that time. Today, there is very little fish; only sardines.”*<sup>24</sup>

Face with this degradation, the fishers no doubt saw boat migration as a divine intervention to deliver them from their difficulties. The migrants consider the lack of fish as the root cause of their departure to Europe, because when there was abundance, nobody left for Europe. Consequently, Modou says:

*“Fishing is the cause; when there is fish, the youths do not leave because we know only Senegal and nothing else. We don’t go to school, we don’t know Europe; it is circumstances that have forced them to leave. If we have work, we won’t go to Spain. We had no migrants before the phenomenon. It was the farmers in Louga and Touba that migrated.”*(Saint Louis, 12/09/08).<sup>25</sup>

This has left the fishers with the feeling that they have been marginalised by the Government, which pays more attention to agriculture than to fishing, and one of my informants thinks that:

*“Fishery is a priority sector that brings in a lot of foreign currency; a lot more than agriculture or any other sector. However, the Government gives priority to farmers and we are left to ourselves. We don’t have any say. We are marginalized.”*<sup>26</sup>

This is a key concern of the fishers who absolutely believe that they have been abandoned to their own devices by the Government. What is striking is that the fishers are well informed of whatever policies and bilateral agreements the Government adopts and signs, but are helpless because of their lack of unity and leadership (See Chapter Seven).

All was not lost to some, who still hoped they could stay behind and make a difference. But events unfolded that challenged their decision to stay, and the only option was to follow the same route as their predecessors, as we shall see in the subsequent paragraph.

### **Unemployment and increased insecure employment**

During our visits to Yarakh, we would meet the group of informants about 10 a.m., either just getting out of bed or getting ready to start preparing tea. In a 2m by 2m hallway, the group sits round a charcoal burner with one person fanning the flames, while the others comment on the *Wollof* news that has just been broadcast. While they are conversing, tea is being served in small glasses. This goes on till lunch time, when the women serve the usual rice and fish sauce. After lunch, another round of tea is made and then the men take a walk to the beach (about 20 metres from their home) to see who has come back from fishing so they can help pull out the boat from the sea in order to be rewarded with some fish that would serve for dinner or lunch for the next day, or be sold for some money. This was equally true of some of the informants we met in Thiaroye and Saint Louis, where the men would sit in a shade by the sea and lunch would be brought to them, and by 5 p.m. they would start heading home. This description sheds light on the stark reality of unemployment that has gained a foothold in these communities.

Upon engaging in a conversation with a migrant, the immediate reason advanced for going to Europe is to seek employment. The general answer is: "Here in Senegal, we have nothing. We want to work and earn money and help our families."<sup>27</sup> Even those with school certificates find it difficult to secure jobs. Disillusioned Moussa believes that: "In Senegal, we study just to gain knowledge, not for employment; I have many certificates which are worthless." (Interview, Saint Louis: 22/09/08).<sup>28</sup> Moussa represents most graduates who are jobless and have braved the sea to go to Europe to look for greener pastures, a claim echoed by Ba (2007), Fall & Cissé (2007), and Fall (2008).

The fishermen decry the lack of industries to process the fish products. “We always sell sardines, but there are no large enterprises. When we go to sea, we catch a lot of sardines; we sell them to the people, and if the people can’t buy all, we throw the rest on the beach. There is no enterprise to process the sardines.”<sup>29</sup> The coming of factories would help curb some of the unemployment problems, but apparently there is still a long way to go before this is achieved. The unemployment rate among the youths in the fishing community is very high, and the inhabitants are grateful to boat migration for it has helped some of the idle men to migrate:

*“It is not that our population is high, but many boys here have no work. There are no jobs. If they continue like this, there will be a lot of trouble. Clandestine immigration has been a great success for Guet Ndariens, or else there would have been a lot of vagabonds, truants, and thieves; the boys have started stealing because there is no work for them... Many youths have no jobs, they only smoke and do drugs. That’s not good, but in Spain they find jobs.”*(Interview, Saint Louis: 14/10/08).<sup>30</sup>

In addition, they see the increased number of trawlers and their failure to respect reproduction sites as well as government subsidies to fish exporters as unfair competition which is endangering artisanal fishing, on which their livelihood depends, thus forcing them out of work. (See also Fall, 2008; Morand & Sall, 2008) (see Chapter 3).

While those left behind are willing to get jobs despite the low wages, still they are discouraged by the manner of payment – piecemeal. They allege that most entrepreneurs are unwilling to pay workers at the end of the month or contract. Rather than pay what is due a worker, the entrepreneurs give the money in bits and take forever to complete the payment, and at worst they are not paid at all. The migrants attribute this to lack of respect of fellow human beings, and believe that in Europe they get equal pay for work done, and any form of contract is respected by both parties. When I first met Sall, he was working for a fish exporter – selecting and packing the fish ready for export. On a second visit, Sall had quit his job, citing the above reason. His employer owed him two months’ salary, and his salary had always been paid piecemeal. A similar concern is expressed by Saidou:

*"Even when you work for people, instead of paying your total wages, they often find a way of giving the money in bits, which will be of no use to you. They decide to give you an advance of 200 francs, 500 francs. Supposing they owe you 5000 francs, in the end you will receive only 1,500 francs. And in this case, you have to pay 200 francs for transport, 800 francs for food, how can you have anything left? The money you are entitled to is divided several times; it's a pity that people have this type of mentality."*(Interview, Yarakh: 16/07/08).<sup>31</sup>

The migrants are well aware of the fact that in Europe salaries are much better than in Africa, as such they are aware of how much they can earn while in Europe as opposed to Africa. In his testimony, Sall says:

*"Here you work for one month, and you are paid only thirty thousand francs. Over there, at the end of each month you receive 1,000 euros or 1200 euros or even 900 euros. But 1,000 euros is equivalent to 650,000 CFA francs. In Senegal, even after working for one year, you cannot save 200,000 CFA francs. I rent a room and I live alone, and buy my food. As you can see, life is hard. Indeed, it's very hard."*(Interview with Sall: 29/07/08 at Saint Louis).<sup>32</sup>

Due to increased frustrations in getting a job and the urgent need to help their families with basic needs, some parents and brothers encouraged members of their families to migrate to Europe as shown in Modou's remarks:

*"But clandestine immigration has been encouraged by everyone. I encouraged many people here. I told them to go to Spain. People from the village, who know nothing, go to Spain; they don't know the sea. It's their first time to see the sea, they have never seen the sea and it's risky for them to go to Spain in a pirogue. And you, fishers, you know the sea, you have been familiar with the sea for years, but you don't seize the opportunity to leave; things will be difficult for you. The boys say I'm right; we know the sea, we leave and finally the boys also leave."*(Interview, 14/10/08: Saint Louis).<sup>33</sup>

### **Corned mareyeur<sup>34</sup>/fishermen by local and European partners**

Despite this exodus, some fishermen and *mareyeurs* still hope to continue where others have given up, and they nurse no intention whatsoever of going to Europe. But sometimes, the pressures

exerted on the fishermen by the *mareyeur* are too great to bear. Quite often, the *mareyeurs* are unwilling to pay a price that would permit the fishermen to make any meaningful profit. In an effort to recover some of their expenses, the fishermen are forced to accept the low prices proposed by the *mareyeur* (see also Bonnardel, 1992: 240). This makes it almost impossible for them to make any meaning out of their livelihood, hence even some of the diehards give up for greener pastures. While the fishermen are being exploited by the *mareyeurs*, the latter in turn are exploited by their local and European partners. Diallo's story will shed more light on this.

Diallo is 41 years old and a dropout from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, following the death of his father in 1994, as he no longer had any financial support. He thinks through every statement he utters, and is very articulate and emotional. In the course of the interviews, there were moments that his voice cracked and he shed tears. The interviews turned out to provide, I believe, periods of release from the emotional stress and trauma he has endured – stress from having abandoned his studies and the trauma from the sea journeys. A son of a fisherman, he chose to become a *mareyeur* because he had to take care of his mother and siblings. He was able to integrate, given that he understood the dynamics involved as he is no stranger to fishing. He did fairly well in his business, and was able to look after his family and soon got married and had three children. He hoped to expand his business by buying a pick-up and taking his supplies to the hinterland. Following an informal agreement between Diallo and a Portuguese partner, the former would supply the latter with fish at the end of each week until the bills would be settled. This deal prompted Diallo to collect supplies from fishermen on credit with the hope of retrieving the money, but by weekend, the exporter sent his shipment to Europe and without paying for the goods vanished. Plagued by huge debts and constant police harassment instigated by his creditors, Diallo had no choice but to yield to the pressures of going to Europe in an attempt to seek a brighter future and to repay his debts. He says:

*“When people heard I had left in a pirogue, they wondered whether I was mad; however, they know the former Diallo who wore beautiful shoes and shirts, but they don't know the Diallo after; nobody tried to know why I had left.”*<sup>35</sup>

Diallo lost three million CFA francs and of this amount only 500,000 CFA francs was his. According to him, there was no way he was going to raise such an amount. When the opportunity presented itself he had to leave as he says: "*I was ready for anything; at that time death meant nothing to me.*"<sup>36</sup> This story is not peculiar to him, as another friend of his lost nine million CFA francs to another European partner and he is currently in Spain working and paying off his debts, while another had to sell his property to pay off some of his creditors.

Going to Spain, to the likes of Diallo, is not out of choice, but rather migrants like him are forced by the circumstances that they are confronted with on the one hand, and by the opportunity offered, on the other hand. Having taken the decision not to migrate in a culture where migration changes one's social status was a giant stride, but working with *mareyeurs* who want to pay very little more than the cost price for goods or with dishonest exporters dampens the spirit to fight on, and drives them to the risk at sea in search for a brighter future in Europe, like the others. Repatriated Senegalese state frankly that the main cause of their problem is bad policies implemented by the government. Is this really the case?

The decision to migrate is by and large hinged on the reliance on and belief in the *marabouts* that the migrants are confident will protect them throughout the journey. Before a decision is taken, a migrant has to consult the *marabout* to find out if he is eligible for the journey, and what sacrifices to carry out in preparation, but above all, to get protective amulets to ensure safe passage. In the following section, I chronicle the role of religion in the lives of the fishermen, and go on to show how this has transcended to boat migration.

### **Fishing, religion and 'maraboutage'**

Contrary to the view that the obituary of religion has been written several times (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996 in Hirschman, 2007: 392), there is very little support for the secularization hypothesis that religion will disappear with modernity. If anything, religion, I contend, is on the rise given that modernity and globalization have failed to usher in the much-vaunted equity and free movement, but rather have been selective. Religion has thus come to fill this gap in

the lives of those who have been bypassed by modernity and globalization. In the case of Senegal and particularly the fishing community, it is through these religious beliefs that the fishermen and eventual migrants are able to seek solace for the inevitable human experiences of death, suffering and loss (Hirschman, 2007). There is an inextricable link between religious beliefs and behaviour, as the latter is a stimulus respond to the former. *Marabouts* in this case provide the fishers and migrants with assurance and freedom from danger through their protective amulets and Koranic incantations.

At the beginning of each fishing season at the various locations, the fishermen consult *marabouts* and offer sacrifices at the banks of the river or by the shores of the sea. This ceremony or superstitious rites '*rites superstitieux*' (Camara, 1968: 164) is, according to my informants, very important and solemn. It is obligatory. It is believed the ceremony is to appease the gods of the sea and ward off any accident that may befall the fishermen, and most importantly, to secure a good catch. Most of the fishermen made it no secret that they cannot go fishing without having consulted a *marabout*, and some showed me the talisman around their arm or worn as a necklace. They claim their lives seem to be guided by '*maraboutage*' and as summarised by one of them "it is part of our lives, we are fanatical because we know only that since our childhood"<sup>37</sup> (Kayar: 25/11/08). Confirming this, Penn – a mareyeur and go-between for clients and *marabouts* – says that each day, before a fisherman sets out for a fishing trip, he either goes to consult a *marabout* or performs some rites that he has been instructed to perform or recite particular verses from the Koran. Others, before they set out for a long trip, consult the *marabout* even if they have been given protective amulets. According to Penn:

*"it is the marabout who asks you what type of fish you want to catch, gives you amulets, or verses of the Koran or powder which you put in the horn of a sheep or any other specified animal and attach to yourself. And the marabout, from his room, in a calabash of water, shows you the type of fish you will catch. In certain cases, you are given specific instructions; nobody but the captain should speak when the net is being thrown. In other cases, the instructions could be: before going out of the pirogue, do this; or before getting into the pirogue, do that or again*

*before throwing the net, do this. They guarantee some types of fish, but you don't give anything so long as you have not caught any fish. However, after catching and selling the fish, you come to him and settle your account, or else you can go for years without catching any fish."*<sup>38</sup>

Penn goes on to say that there are various *grigris* given by the *marabout* that serve different functions. Some are known as '*demmm dikk*' – *va et vient* [go and return], and this means that when a fisherman has this around his waist, no accident at sea can befall him, and he can never die out of his house. Others practise what is called '*Listakar*' – "a certain clear-sightedness in full darkness when people are taking their bath and you do two 'raquet' of prayer and ask God what you want"<sup>39</sup> Others follow a higher level, '*Khaalwha*' – "a high spiritual dimension which enables one to see things very clearly. You see what is required and necessary for the journey."<sup>40</sup> He sums up by saying: "with us, it is like a drug, before embarking on anything, even love, the first thing to do is to go to the *marabout*."<sup>41</sup> (Kayar: 25/11/08).

From the above, we see that religion and fishing are practically inseparable as they have become inextricably linked. Also, the fishermen's belief that they cannot get a good catch without the intervention of the *marabout* sustains this practice. Knowing that these fishers are potential migrants, this belief in *marabouts* is inherently transported to the migration process and gives it much impetus. Migration cannot be complete without the conveyor or the migrants going to see a *marabout* for protection. Migrants are ready to walk out on a conveyor if it comes to light that the latter has not consulted a *marabout*. The migrants and their families go all out to perform all the necessary sacrifices demanded by the *marabout* to ensure the safe passage of their sons and husbands. Even in the event where a migrant leaves without informing the family, once this comes to light, the family takes it upon themselves to consult one.

The mass exodus of fishermen has no doubt affected the fishery industry and the livelihoods of families in various ways.

### **The effects of boat migration on the fishery sector**

*"Some of them have suffered so much at sea that they don't want to return there; others no longer want to work, no matter the job. They have delusions of greatness from the idea that they have been to Spain, and they can no longer work."*<sup>42</sup>



This opening quote by Penn is the imprint that boat migration has left on the repatriated migrants. Along the beach in Kayar and Saint Louis and neighbourhoods like Yarakh and Tefesse, the image of jobless men playing beach volley/soccer or sitting idle is all too visible. These men tell the same story, ‘the sea is unproductive and we have seen the beauty of Europe, we do not want to go back to fishing’. At the same time, we note that this refusal to return to their occupation is depriving it of its best fishermen as those who embarked on the journey were the best navigators. This means that families may own boats, but no one to take them out for fishing, and so they resort to hiring them to others. The returnees are adamant about going back to Spain even by the next boat; hence going back to the job they left is simply out of the question. Diallo, a repatriated migrant, neatly summarises the ideology of the migrants:

*“Of course, we were repatriated. Fishermen who came back don’t accept to continue fishing. Some of them have remained for more than one year without going out to sea. They no longer have the desire to continue fishing. Many of their friends had left. Freed, they went back to Spain and Italy. They also, know what is happening there. They have seen buildings in Spain. For them, they had already lived their dreams. They were really in despair. Many people went back; some were imprisoned because things had changed.”* (Kayar, 25/11/08).<sup>43</sup>



*Returned migrant who spends his time playing beach soccer and has turned down fishing*



*Repatriated migrants  
who have refused  
to resume their jobs  
as fishers*

This clearly shows how determined the migrants are to realise their dream, no matter what it takes. Some of them openly express the wish of being imprisoned in Spain rather than stay idle in Senegal, because in Europe human rights are respected, and though in prison, one leads a better life, whereas in Senegal without money you are nobody. This equally means that those who are left as fishermen are mostly the young and inexperienced ones, whose goal is simply to fish without taking into consideration what is the right size, and also due to their inexperience do not master exactly the sections of the sea that are rich in fish products that are high in demand (*les espèces nobles – the noble species*). The consequence again is lack of fish and reckless over-exploitation, which in turn is unsustainable for the sea and the environment.



*Returned migrant who  
has equally given up  
on fishing*

### Effects of boat migration on the family

Fishing and livelihood are inextricably linked as the former is a response to satisfy the latter. When all is not well with fishing, the knock-on effect is depreciation in livelihood. The simple fact that the migrants have been to Spain and have been repatriated gives them a feel of the 'good life' they have long dreamed of and which they have come so close to achieving, but have been denied; that is why they see no reason to toil for months and years at sea, while their peers who make it into Spain are able to earn 'enough' within a month. The effect of the migrants who have returned and are unwilling to go back to fishing is the lack of steady income for the family, and this will invariably affect their livelihood. On the other hand, those who did not make it to the Canaries have left behind indelible scars on their families and widows. For instance, since Sall's repatriation, he has not gone back to fishing and as a result is unable to met his basic medical bills or eat properly; consequently, he is contemplating not having a spouse. Once in a while, he is called upon to offload fish from the boat and is paid a minimal amount; he depends on the '*teranga*' (hospitality) of friends for his daily subsistence. Also, even for those with spouses, the situation is no different from Sall's, for they depend on those members of the family who work. Baye is a case in point. He is married with two children and the family owns a boat. Ever since he was repatriated twice, he has not gone back to fishing. I met him on the beach with a group of repatriated men like him playing beach soccer, all of whom said they were no longer interested in fishing, and their main preoccupation was to look for other means of migrating. Baye depends on his inexperienced siblings who go out fishing and also on his wife, who sells fish, to subsidize the family income. Before, Baye used to go with the *bateau ramasseur* (Chinese and Korean trawlers) for three months and would come back with an income of four hundred and ten thousand CFA francs. But he has given up on it, and this has put enormous strain on the family given that the younger brothers who go out to fish do not come back with any meaningful income, except when they go with the *bateau ramasseur*.

The effect is further seen with the retired fishermen who have been forced to return to fishing either due to the departure of their sons or as a result of those who have come back and are unwilling

to return to their occupation. In the meantime, those who are too weak to go fishing stay by the beach and wait for returning boats to help them out ashore, and thereby receive a few fish which they either sell or take home for the family meals. Boat migration has changed the social status of some families, but it has also impoverished others and reduced them to beggars.

## Conclusion

It is therefore against this backdrop that the fishers saw that their experience and profession are at the nexus of boat migration, and became completely enthralled by the phenomenon of boat migration as organisers, seafarers and migrants, as seen in the previous chapter. Having been used to spending weeks on high seas and thus quite familiar with the dangers that it involved, going to Spain was like another fishing expedition to them.

## Notes

1. Yaboy refers to sardine fish which due to its bony nature it is difficult to eat, similarly, it refers to young men who have nothing to offer women. Thiouf is the highest priced fish and refers to the wealthy men who can offer a comfortable life for their concubine.
2. « À l'époque c'était agreeable, c'était bon, parce que en ce moment là la pêche nourrissait son homme, ils n'avaient pas assez des pêcheurs, ils n'avaient des pirogues et assez des populations. Aujourd'hui le Senegal a 11 million de plus de population, donc il y a un surcharge sur les poissons. La pêche ne peut plus nourrisait son homme parce que il y a un sous production sur la pêche. Nos grandparents et pères vivaient de l'agriculture, donc ils avaient deux travail different; la pêche et l'agriculture. Il n'y avait pas assez des personnes, on n'avait pas eu des moteurs ni des grands pirogues. Mais aujourd'hui c'est un grand surcharge parce que les pirogues avant avaient une dimension de six ou sept metres, et les pirogues n'étaient pas moteuriser, et on partait à la pêche avec des voiles et des parquets. C'est ne pas le cas d'aujourd'hui parce que aujourd'hui on peut noter que les pirogues sont assez grandes et certains on une dimension de 25 metres, deux moteurs qui ont une force de 60 chevaux. Le grand moteur et la grande pirogue nous a laissé une grande catastrophe . . . nous n'avons pas access au marché international, le marché interieur est saturé. Et celui qui va à la pêche revient avec 400 ou 500 cases de poissons, s'il n'y a pas assez de

conservation, assez de mareyeur, donc c'est la catastrophe, c'est raison pour laquelle la pêche ne peut plus nourrir son homme et aussi raison pour laquelle nos jeunes quittent le Sénégal pour aller en Espagne. »

3. « De 7000 pirogues vers la fin des années 90, le volume de la flotte est passé aujourd'hui à 13.000 pirogues, soit Presque un doublement de la flotte en moins de 10 ans . . . »
4. « On n'utilisait pas les machines. Les rames nous permettaient de nous déplacer. Les poissons qu'on capturait, n'existent plus. La prise on se le partageait, et il en restait toujours une partie qu'on emenait à la maison. Cela a permis d'élever la famille et les enfants ont grandi dans ce cadre. Maintenant les poissons ont diminué. Il n'en reste presque. On doit se rendre jusqu'en Conakry pour en trouver. Ou bien se déplacer jusqu'à Nouadhibou. Auparavant cela n'existait pas. Quand on partait le matin, on revenait toujours le soir. Maintenant les pêcheurs peuvent rester plus de 10 jours en mer. »
5. En 1952, dans ce bâtiment, il y avait un certain Monsieur Arnaud qui voulait introduire les moteurs de pêche. Le travail de la pêche était tellement facile et plaisant que nos pères et grands pères s'opposent à l'introduction de ce moteur. À l'époque un litre d'essence coutaient 30 francs. En 1968 quand j'ai acheté un moteur de 18 chevaux, il a coûté 105.000 francs. Le poisson s'est déplacé très loin jusqu'en Mauritanie. Tu ne peux l'attrape qu'en Mauritanie. Et le litre d'essence aujourd'hui coût 580 francs-le moteur de 40 chevaux coûte 1.080.000 CFA francs. le moteur de 15 chevaux coûte 1.050.000 francs CFA. les moyens ont changé. Le gouvernement ne nous aide plus à rien, nous les pêcheurs de Guet Ndar – si le gouvernement nous aidait, les choses seraient beaucoup moins difficiles. Mais ce n'est pas le cas. En ces temps après la saison sèche, aux mois de juillet, août, septembre, on partait avec les moins de la nourriture. Et l'on restait moins de quatre heures de temps en mer. Les poissons étaient nombreux et descendaient avec la saison pluvieuse. « Feuteu », « Sikaneu », et les Sipakh » tous venaient ensemble pendant la colonisation, les bateaux destructeurs n'existaient pas. Les bateaux qui détruisent appartiennent au Sénégal. Les poissons s'accompagnent avec d'autres espèces. Ces dernières étant détruites, on ne voit plus les poissons. Ceci est dû aux gouvernements qui prennent de mauvaises décisions.
6. Jusqu'aujourd'hui. Arnaud avait une fois prédit la situation qu'on est en train de vivre, selon lui on devrait faire une sélection des espèces qu'on devait capturer. Les poissons rouges, on les voit plus. Cela est dû à la pêche intensive et le gouvernement ne nous aide en rien. Souvent,

on reste 4 à 5 jours dans la mer de la Mauritanie. Dans nos mers, il n’y a plus rien. Ils ont gardé et préservé leurs mers. Au Sénégal on ne protège rien, on laisse les bateaux détruire.

7. Les ressources halieutiques Sénégalaises sont concernées par la dégradation . . . , on peut affirmer que la dégradation est inseparable d’une intensification et d’une industrialisation de la pêche, d’une articulation de la pêche aux enjeux commerciaux, don’t l’accord intervient en 1979 entre l’Union Européenne et le Sénégal reste un repère important. Ceci nous amène donc à inscrire la dégradation des ressources halieutiques dans un processus historique.
8. « Quand on était plus jeunes et des pêcheurs, il y avait tant de choses qui étaient libres dans la mer. Les ressources étaient plus accessibles. Il y avait beaucoup plus d’opportunités. Mais maintenant pour trouver du poisson, tu peux rester dix jours en mer. Avec des risques, parce que si les Mauritaniens nous attrapent ils confisquent nos pirogues et moteurs. Ma pirogue et mon moteur sont resté confisqués en Mauritanie pendant un an. C’est à ce niveau que se situe la différence. En ces temps, si on partait à la pêche, on revenait tout de suite après. »
9. Au passé il n’y avait assez d’argent, mais il avait plus de valeur. En 1968 quand je me suis marié, un kilogramme de riz coûtait 30 francs, demi litre d’huile à 30 francs. Avec 5000 cela couvrait les dépenses pour plus d’un mois. Mais maintenant avec 100.000 F, ce n’est pas suffisant pour couvrir le mois. L’argent est plus nombreux maintenant mais il a moins de valeur maintenant. Le kilogramme de sucre contenait 130 Francs et le kilogramme de riz à 30 francs. Un litre d’huile à 30 francs. A la maison, il n’y a que moi, la femme de mon fils et mon petit fils et chaque jour je dépense 3500 francs. Quand tous les membres de la famille étaient présents je dépensais 6000 francs par jour. according to the elderly informants, Arnaud said the noise from the engines would help to chase the fish away, and that they will not be able to fish within metres from the shores. All his predictions have come to pass.
10. « Dans l’entre-deux guerre mondiales et jusqu’à l’indépendance, Saint Louis est le premier centre de pêche du pays et, dans la ville, la pêche constitue, aux côtés artisanat, la seule activité productive à finalité commerciale . . . mais, depuis les années 1960, parmi les centres de pêche pirogueère du Sénégal, Guet Ndar a régressé doublement; par le tonnage de poisson débarqué qui stagne aux alentours de 8000 à 10.000 tonnes par an; par l’important recul du faubourg dans la production nationale. »

11. According to my informants, they go as far as to Gabon, Angola, Mozambique and The Comoros.
12. « Le phénomène du clandestin est dû à une pêche qui n'est plus profitable. Elle ne peut plus garantir quelque chose à ces jeunes là. Hier les pêcheurs ne pouvaient pas comprendre que certains s'orientent dans le métier de guide touristique. Pour eux le fait normal était de se rendre en mer et pêcher. C'était une culture pour eux. Quand on proposait à certains d'aller en Europe, les parents étaient en désaccord avec cette idée. Aujourd'hui ce sont ces mêmes parents qui vendent leurs terrains et biens pour faire partir leurs enfants par les pirogues. Vous voyez un peu le contraste. Les gens ont toujours évolué dans le secteur de la pêche. Ceux qui les obligeaient à rester dans leur local terroir, ne le font plus. Ils n'ont plus d'espoir dans la pêche. Pour eux c'est l'heure de rompre avec cette activité qu'ils ont toujours connue depuis leurs arrières grands parents. Aujourd'hui ils sont prêts à signer le divorce avec ce métier là. Pour eux la pêche ne peut rien leur garantir. Il y a une détérioration, une perte de valeurs dans cette pêche. Elle est reconnue par tout le monde d'ailleurs. La pêche a une fois fait la belle vie à ces jeunes. Rien qu'à cela, ça peut suffire. Pour dire qu'il y a des changements. La pêche ne va plus par rapport au paravant. »
13. « La mer sur laquelle tu comptais n'a plus de poisson. Tu veux travailler pour les entretenir (parents), la mer sur laquelle ils comptaient n'a plus rien. C'est la raison pour laquelle, ils s'embarquent pour l'immigration clandestine. Le gouvernement avait promis qu'il allait placer des refuges, des repos dans la mer. Ces repos doivent servir de lieux où les poissons pourront se reproduire; tout a été détruit. La mer a été détruite. »
14. « On connaît le chemin mieux qu'eux. C'est pour cela on est plus familier à la mer et on maîtrise plus que le chemin à emprunter. Même à l'école, certains sont classés 1er, 2ème, 3ème. Et dans le positionnement, nous sommes les premiers et ils viennent en 4ème position. »
15. « Nous voulons bien rester et travailler pour notre pays, mais nous n'avons aucune opportunité. Je suis pêcheur depuis ma naissance et je ne connais que cela, mais aujourd'hui la pêche ne nous apporte plus rien. »
16. « Une pirogue qui transporte 300 caisses de glace, autant de litres d'essence. Avant de récupérer tout cet argent, ce sera très difficile. Souvent on achète jusqu'à 18 bidons de 60 litres d'essence. Il y a beaucoup de fatigue et pas assez de rendements. »

17. « Moi je suis né le 13/11/1964, la pêche, le travail de la mer, est dur, tu fais quinze jours dans la mer, tu couche là-bas, la pluie pleut, le vent, la mer c'est trop dur. »
18. It has a king size bed, huge wardrobe, TV set and DVD as well as a large music system, which are all signs in this community of success and consumption.
19. « Le moteur coûte 2.500.000 Francs, la pirogue 5 millions. Les filets entre 5 à 8 millions. Tout ce matériel est réuni, et il n'y a pas assez de ressources. On a peur du gouvernement. Ils sont plus instruits que nous en français. Ils peuvent te dribler et manger ton argent. C'est ce qui nous arrive maintenant. Avant de nous accorder le plus petit, ils nous demandent nos papiers de maison. S'ils nous prêtent 15 millions, on pourra acheter une pirogue avec les 10 millions. »
20. « ... l'effet que à l'issue de la coopération Français, le fameux accord Français nous a beaucoup sorti de préjudice, c'est à dire que, l'Unioin Europeen (UE) était venu ici au Sénégal pour acheter tous nos poissons pour revendre en Europe. »
21. Q: L'accord là, c'est pour l'UE et les Français pour venir pêcher ici ou c'est juste pour venir acheter les poissons?  
R: C'est à dire qu'ils ont fait des accords governmental, ils ont proposés de donner au government de l'argent pour l'accès de pêcheur sur nos côtes. »
22. « Il n'y a pas les poissons parce que le government de Abdou Diouf avait donné les licences de pêche aux Chinois et les Coréens. Les bateaux industriels ont ramassés tous les poissons qu'on avait ici au Sénégal. »
23. « Les ressources halieutiques Sénégalaises sont concernées par la dégradation. Celle-ci peut être mise en évidence de diverses manières. ..., dont l'accord intervenu en 1979 entre l'Union Européenne et le Sénégal reste un repère important. »
24. « La pêche en 1982, il y avait beaucoup de l'argent, il y avait beaucoup des poissons, en 1982 tu pars à la pêche tu ne peux pas rester la nuit. Tu pars le matin et tu reviens le soir, et tu as beaucoup des poissons. Maintenant, tu fais quinze ou dix jours dans la mer. Mais là en 1982 les poissons n'avaient pas de valeur. Tu pouvais vendre beaucoup des poissons à 25,000 francs CFA, mais l'argent de l'époque avait de valeur. Et aujourd'hui il y a rien dans la pêche, il y a que les sardines maintenant. »



25. « C'est la pêche ici qui a fait ça, quand il y a les poissons les gosses ne sortent pas ici parce qu'on ne connaît que le Sénégal, on connaît rien. On ne fait pas l'école, on ne connaît pas Europe, c'est le cas qui a amené les gosses. Mais s'il y a le travail, on ne fait pas; on ne part pas en Espagne. Ici il n'y a pas des émigrés avant le phénomène. C'est à Louga, à Touba, les cultivateurs c'est les gars là qui on fait l'émigré. »
26. « La pêche est un secteur prioritaire qui fait entrer beaucoup des devises, plus que l'agriculture ou tel autre secteur. Mais le gouvernement favorise les cultivateurs et nous sommes laissés en rade. On n'est pas impliqué dans la prise de parole. On est marginalisation ! »
27. « Ici au Sénégal il y a rien, on veut travailler et surtout gagner de l'argent pour aider la famille. »
28. « Au Sénégal on étudie pour l'école de la connaissance et non pour le boulot, j'en ai beaucoup des diplômes qui ne valent rien. »
29. « On vend toujours les sardines, mais les sardines n'ont pas de gros entreprise quand la pirogue va à la pêche, il attrape beaucoup des sardines, on les vend, si la population est saturé on décharge le reste au bord de la mer. Il n'y a pas des entreprise qui travail des sardines. »
30. « Non qu'on est peuplé, beaucoup des gars ici n'ont pas de travail. Il n'y a pas le boulot. S'ils continuent comme ça il y a beaucoup de bagarre ici. Le clandestin est une grande réussite pour les Guet Ndarien, sinon il y a les vagabonds, des voyous, des bandits, les boys ont commencé de voler parce qu'on n'a pas quoi travailler ...beaucoup des jeunes qui ne travaillaient pas, ils ne font que fumer des cigarettes, drogues. C'est pas bon, mais en Espagne ils travaillent. »
31. « Même quand tu travailles pour des gens, au lieu de te payer ton argent, ils trouvent toujours le moyen de te donner des miettes qui ne serviront à rien du tout. Ils décideront de donner une avance de 200 francs CFA, 500 francs CFA. Supposons ils te doivent la somme de 5000 francs CFA, au finir tu ne percevras que 1500 francs CFA. Et dans ce cas tu es obligé de payer 200 francs CFA pour le transport, 800 francs CFA dans d'autres dépenses de la nourriture, comment est ce que quelque chose peut il rester ? L'argent que tu mérites est divisé à plusieurs reprises, et c'est dommage que les gens ont cette mentalité. »
32. « Ici tu travailles un mois, tu ne perçois que trente milles. Là bas tu travailles, tu perçois chaque fin du mois •1000 ou •1200, ou même •900. Mais •1000 c'est 650.000 francs CFA. Au Sénégal tu travailles plus d'un an, tu ne peux même pas rassembler 200.000 francs CFA. Tu es en location. Je vis seul, paies à manger. Vous vous imaginez c'est très dur. Sérieusement c'est très dur. »

33. « Mais immigration clandestine c'est un phenomene que tout le monde a poussé, moi j'ai poussé beaucoup des gens ici. Je les ai dit va en Espagne, quand les innocents qui sont au village, qui ne connaissent rien, et ils partent en Espagne, ils ne connaissent pas la mer. Ils n'ont jamais vu la mer, c'est leur premiere fois de voir la mer, risqué pour partir à la mer, pour partir avec la pirogue pour aller en Espagne. Et vous les pêcheurs vous connaissez, vous êtes habitués de la mer depuis des années vous qui maîtrisez bien la mer ne saisi pas cette occasion de partir, vous restez ici ça sera dur avec vous. Les gosses me dissent toi tu as raison, nous, nous sommes connaisseur de la mer, on part, et finalement les gosses partent. »
34. Those who buy fish directly from the fishermen and sell to exporters or export themselves. Most often, they own boats and are former fishermen themselves.
35. « Quand les gens ont entendus que j'ai pris la pirogue ils demandaient si je suis devenu fou ou quoi, mais pourtant ils connaissaient le Diallo d'avant qu'il portait les belles chaussures, et chemises, mais ils ne connaissaient pas le Diallo d'après, personne n'a chercher le fond pour savoir la raison de mon depart. »
36. « J'étais prêt pour tout, en ce moment-là, la mort ne me disait rien. »
37. « ça fait partie de nos vies, nous sommes fanatique parce que à base age on ne connait que ça. »
38. « Qui te demande quelles especes de poisson tu veux attraper, et il te donne les grigris, soit des versets Koraniques ou de poudre que tu attaches dans la corne des moutons ou d'autre animaux spécifiés. Et le marabout à partir de sa chambre dans une calebasse d'eau, il te montre les especes de poisson que tu vas attraper. Pour certain cas, on te donne les consignes bien précis; soit personne ne parle pas sauf le capitaine quand on lance le filet. Pour les autres, les recommandations peuvent demander: avant de débarquer tu fais ceci, embarquer fait ça, avant de lancer le filet tu fait ça et en débarquant tu fais cela. Il te garantit des especes mais tu ne donnes rien tant que tu n'as pas pris. Mais après la capture et la vendre tu passes regler le compte, si non tu peux faire des années sans rien capturer. »
- « Chez nous c'est comme un drogue, avant d'entrer en quelque chose même l'amour la premiere chose à faire c'est de solliciter le marabout. »
39. « une sorte de clairvoyance en plein nuit quand tout le monde se lave et tu pries deux raquet et de prière, et tu demandes à Dieu de ce que tu veux. »

40. « Haut dimension spirituelle qui se permet de voir les choses bien définies. Tu vois ce qui est indiqué et ce qui est commandé pour faire le voyage. »
41. « Chez nous c'est comme un drogue, avant d'entrer en quelque chose même l'amour la première chose à faire c'est de solliciter le marabout. »
42. « Certains sont tellement soufferts en mer, qu'ils ne veulent pas retourner à la mer, d'autres ne veulent plus exercer de travail, quelque soit le travail. Ils ont une certaine folie de grandeur que je suis parti jusqu'en Espagne, je ne peux plus travailler. »
43. « Effectivement on a été rapatrié. Les pêcheurs qui sont revenus n'acceptaient plus de reprendre le métier de pêcheur. Il y en a certains qui sont restés plus d'un an sans aller en mer. Ils n'avaient plus la volonté de continuer leur boulot. Il y a pas mal de leurs copains qui sont partis. Libérés, ils ont regagnés l'Espagne et l'Italie. Eux aussi, ils savent ce qui se passe là-bas. Ils ont vu les édifices de l'Espagne. Pour eux leur rêve était déjà réalisé. C'est carrément le désespoir. Beaucoup de gens sont repartis, certains ont été emprisonnés parce que ce n'était plus comme avant. »



#### **Introduction**

Boat migration was seen by many people like Ahmed (see case study below) as manna from heaven, a means finally to migrate to Europe, despite the huge wall Europe had erected around it through its visa and immigration policies. In some respects, it has changed the intended social status of some migrants and their families; for others, it has left indelible scars and trauma, and turned them into angry people whose aim in life would be fulfilled only when they finally reach Europe. The phenomenon of boat migration comes in response to the marginality of migrants. They have been classified by the society as marginal at the geographic, social and economic levels; they also see themselves as marginalized and as a group of people that have been forgotten by the State in terms of social amenities, job creation and even through government support for other sectors (agriculture) over the fishery sector (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven).

Having accepted the subaltern position ascribed to them by themselves and the society (see Chapter Three), they strongly believe that going out in search of greener pastures will alleviate their situation. But also, their lifestyle and demands are evolving, and they now tend to focus on material goods, and consumerism is fast becoming a new lifestyle as opposed to the past, when they were simply window shoppers or consumer gatecrashers. In this regard, we may turn to Featherstone's (1991) identification of one of the perspectives of consumer culture for help to understand this phenomenon which he labels the 'emotional pleasures of consumption'. He (Ibid: 13) goes on to describe "dreams and desires which become celebrated in consumer cultural imagery and particular sites of consumption which variously generate direct bodily excitement and aesthetic pleasures".

From this perspective, it could, for example, be argued that the accumulation of consumer and 'ostentatious' goods is gradually effacing the old traditional culture of accumulation of fishing

materials as a sign of social standing. Hence cultural traditions and qualities become transformed into quantities. It is therefore this desire to amass 'quantities' that is kindling the fishers' desire for change in lifestyle.

This chapter thus seeks to understand the economic benefits of boat migration. By so doing, it will establish the relationship between migration and relationships back at home. What is the impact of boat migration in diversifying income and on family ties? Has boat migration enhanced family ties or severed them? Is it the panacea for uplifting social status and livelihood as conceived by the migrants and their families? And has it strengthened family ties as a result of the economic gains of migrants? What are the effects of failed migration on the migrants and their families? In an effort to answer these questions, emphasis will be laid on repatriated migrants and families of successful migrants given that research was carried out only in Senegal, as earlier mentioned in Chapter One. Also, as has been the case throughout the previous chapters, the voices of the migrants and their families will help provide answers to the questions.

In looking at the consequences of boat migration, attention will be paid to the effects of successful migration. How is success measured and how has it changed the lives of those left behind? Next we will dwell on the impact of failed migration on the migrants as well as on the families. How are those repatriated and their families regarded in their society, and has their livelihood changed or deteriorated? Next, based on accounts from families in Senegal, I will explore the effects of living in Spain as an undocumented migrant (*sans papiers*) and seek to understand what prospects there are for these migrants to be fully integrated into their host society. Are they willing to face the 'humiliation' of retuning to Senegal?

Religion and religious beliefs once more play a role in the economic setup of boat migration. Of particular interest is how migrants are determined to stay in Spain by asking for the intercession of *marabouts*. By sending remittances to families, which money is expected to be used in consulting *marabouts* and performing sacrifices in order to hasten the procurement of a legal status. The foregoing questions will be answered through a careful juxtaposition of the emic and etic perspectives to give a balanced account.

Before we proceed, let us first situate the above trend within the broader current debates in order to conceptualise better the economy of boat migration. Until recently, the study of migration has focused on the economic potential of migration, spear-headed by Todaro (1970) in the neoclassical migration approach. Within the framework of this approach, the position is that “people from areas and countries characterized by resource deficiencies, unemployment and low wages and marginal productivity are attracted to areas or countries characterized by relative labour scarcity and abundant capital, resources and higher wages” (Naerssen et al, 2008: 4). This no doubt holds some resonance given that one may point to the importance of remittances of migrants to the recipient countries. However, it tends to be blind to the social and cultural factors that determine whether a migrant leaves the community or not, given that the family is layered in a kinship structure and migration is not an individual decision. Hence, more often than not, the decision to migrate is a family decision and not totally dependent on the individual.

Nonetheless, migration is dynamic and recent models have attempted to be all-inclusive; the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM, henceforth) seems to provide a better alternative to the neoclassical approach. NELM, in contrast to the neoclassical approach, took cognizance of the fact that migration forms part of household livelihood strategies (Stark, 1991). As pointed out by De Haas, NELM theory integrates motives other than individual income maximization that play a role in migration decision making (2008: 23). Migration thus is primarily perceived as a household response to income risks because remittances serve as income insurance for households in the country of origin (Lucas & Stark, 1985: 902, cited in De Haas 2008: 23). From this perspective then, migration is seen as one of the main strategies to diversify, secure and sustainably improve livelihood. Concurring with their argument, I go further to look at the other side of migration in the eventuality where it does not serve as income insurance. Given that migration is a livelihood strategy to diversify and increase the incomes of the households left behind, one would expect migrants to send considerable amounts of remittances back to their households and the incomes of these households will be far more than that of non-migrants households.

Evidence from empirical data shows that not all migrant households received the expected income, although they had hoped migration would boost their livelihood. This is partly due to that fact that most migrants do not have a regular income. Hence they can only send home some money when they secure a job, or are able to borrow a work permit from a migrant who is going on holidays, and/or through street hawking. In addition, some migrants have completely severed links with the extended family and support only their immediate family, which is considered out of the norm in Senegal. So, why then migrate in the first place, if migration was intended to help the family? There is a new aura of consumerism that has cropped up and is changing the lifestyle of the fishermen, shifting from counting their wealth more in terms of how many pirogues, nets and engines owned to that of owning a comfortable home.

This aspiration is embodied by the younger generation with each aspiring to own an *étage* (storied) house – with western style finishing and furniture, if possible. This could possibly explain why remittances to some families are not regular, as some migrants prefer to save towards building a house. The bottom line is that it is the newly-acquired cultural norm of the fishers wherein the ownership of landed property such as houses, land and conspicuous goods as cars, trendy cell phones and pop-style dressing is the norm and marker of identity. As much as I agree with De Haas (2008) that migration is a livelihood strategy, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is equally a cultural phenomenon where one is identified and respected more as a migrant than based on how much he has accumulated.

### **Consequences of boat migration on relationships at home**

As seen in the previous chapter, boat migration was largely a family matter because many families had mobilised resources to send members with the hope that it would guarantee a regular income and perhaps serve as a pension fund. The story of Ahmed reveals to what lengths migrants are willing to go to enter Spain and make families' livelihood dependent on boat migration. Using Ahmed's case study and that of Fatou (below) as a springboard, we can understand the economic dynamics surrounding boat migration.





*Ahmed*

### **The story of Ahmed and family**

I would like you to meet Ahmed. Ahmed is 46 years old, and he is married with two daughters. I was introduced to Ahmed's family by Mohammed, my research guide. Ahmed is his maternal uncle. We arrived at Ahmed's house about 10 a.m. and he was just getting out of bed with the family, and the wife started picking all the dirty cups from the previous night – I presume they were used for tea. Ahmed apologised for just waking up; they had stayed up into the morning discussing politics. Just then, the wife butted in: 'I hope we will not eat politics today'; I later asked Mohammed what that was supposed to mean. He told me that she is asking him to give money for the "*dépense quotidienne*" (daily expenses); he hinted that maybe there had been a fight, and he has not been forthcoming with money for food, hence the reason for her sarcasm.

The compound is made up of three houses. As one enters it, Ahmed's house faces the entrance; to the right is the house of a long-time friend of his father and his brother's wife, and to the left is that of his paternal aunt and her children plus their spouses, and a very small space in the centre for the children to play. There is no kitchen and each family creates a space by the side of their house for use as a kitchen. At lunchtime they all come together to eat, as each family brings its food to one common room (Ahmed's section), and they all sit around the basin of rice to eat. The meals usually consist of the traditional rice and fish (sardines) dish. In the yard, there are a handful of chickens running around. the chickens are always conscious when it is lunch time and their presence is very

visible as they wait for the crumbs; they even threaten to eat from the same bowl as the family. Eating seems to consist in a constant struggle to keep away both flies and chickens. Unlike most families, they do not keep sheep.



*Lunch time with Ahmed's family*

Ahmed's wife is pregnant with their third child; the first is seven years old and the second is four. On another visit, she reminds him that he has not yet paid for the drugs that were prescribed, and soon a quarrel erupted about his inability to pay for her drugs each time she comes home with a prescription. The family tries to intervene, but she is unstoppable. Ahmed calls me aside and begs me to give him some money to pay for the prescription (2,500 CFA francs). Communication between us is difficult as she speaks no French at all. Each time I have to talk to her, it is through an interpreter. Ahmed tells me she is very quarrelsome, and does not like to sit with the other women in the yard to converse. I noticed it as well; she was always in her house. But she said the other women made fun of her because she could not dress well like them, a thing Ahmed admits.

Visiting the family after a month of absence in Saint Louis, I discovered Ahmed's wife had had a miscarriage. She was the first to tell me through sign language – touching her stomach and with signs that it is gone. Ahmed later told me what happened, and blames

it on lack of rest, proper diet and his inability to provide for her drugs. Through my interpreter, she told me that she would like to buy fish from the pirogues and take to the market to sell, but lacked the starting capital, and wanted me to lend her 5,000 francs to start off with (which I did but never expected to be paid back). She wanted to engage into this form of business so she could guarantee food for her family because if she relied on her husband, they would have to go hungry on some days.

My presence always drew a small crowd of idle men because during these periods we would consume a lot of ‘*ataya*’, (tea) and as long as there is *ataya*, the crowd stays put. But these were also periods when a lot of information about migration was obtained (see Chapter Five).



*Ahmed's sister-in-law*

### **Another dimension of ‘maraboutage’**

Ahmed tells of how widely he has travelled to other African countries, working for a construction company. But he quickly added that he would have been someone today if his father was not constantly standing on his way. How, I asked? He tells his story of how his father never wanted him to go away from his sight

*“You are my only son and I can’t let you go. And I’m not sure you’ll come back. I explained to him that I wanted to go and earn some money and help the family, but he wouldn’t understand. Against his will, I left and went to Cote d’Ivoire, and he made me come back. I left again and went to Togo and Ghana. When I*

*came back and there were other facilities, he refused to let me go again. I went to the village in Walo to find the mystical baths. But he refused to let me go because I am his eye, his foot and his strength. But he kept his word until the end of his life. He told me, if you don't believe, then go. Wherever you go, you will return and you will not know what makes you come back. I have not been able to leave again, the strength and experience are still there. I had to be somebody, but God alone knows what is in store for me. He left a box, he advised me to learn how to use it. I travelled far, but each time he made me come back. He thought once abroad, I would not come back again. And he would lose me.”<sup>1</sup>*

Ahmed has been part of the organising team for various boat trips to Spain; being a carpenter, he worked with others to construct the boats that were bound for Spain. After a while, he decided that he too would like to travel to see how his friends are succeeding. But this was against his father's wish, although he seemingly gave Ahmed his blessing. Despite his persistence, the journey did not materialise. What turned out to be a blessing was a *grigri* for him not to succeed.

*“My father asked me whether I wanted to leave. I said no. It was the 7<sup>th</sup> pirogue I was constructing for departure to Spain. The trip was scheduled for a Saturday. When he was told, he refused. Finally, he let me go. Three hours before our arrival in Spain, the pirogue split. I tried and the people and the planks cut my body. An aunt had predicted it. Subsequently, we decided to come back. We arrived in Nouadhibou at 5 p.m. Those who were sick were taken out of the pirogue. They were spread out like sheep. I came back to Guéiawaye around 5 a.m. I asked my wife to rub my back with shea butter. When my father came back home, he laughed. I told him he was responsible for my return. He admitted it was true. He didn't want to lose me forever. He blessed me, but he was not happy.”<sup>2</sup>*

You must be wondering how his father was capable of making him come back. This is what he said:

*“When I sent him money, he used it to make me come back. He didn't want the money; he wanted me to come back. I was with a girl whom I abandoned because her father was aware that I would leave. If my father had not held me back, I would have succeeded at that time. My father thought I was going to get lost. Wherever I was, I would not go on with my journey, because my father had not given me his authorization. From Sierra Leone, I wanted to go to Spain. Then*

*the person who had to take me contacted my father. He told my father that I was very close to Spain. I remained in Las Palmas for seven months. My father made me drink a potion which he sent to me in a letter, and that made me come back. If not, I would have left Senegal long ago. They did not want my money. They preferred my presence. They used the money I sent to them to consult marabouts to make me return. When I did not call them for two months, they were angry and asked me to come back. They said they would make me come back if I didn't. I never thought my father could have such a hold on me. I couldn't know it, but now that both of them (my mother and my father) are dead, I have taken their place in the family. I am the head of the family.”<sup>23</sup>*

Ahmed worked for a construction company that took him to various African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco and Sierra Leone, and to Las Palmas. This was due to the number of trades he mastered (carpentry, plumbing, and painting). He is convinced that if he is able to migrate, with these different trades, he could get a job in a construction company given that construction is booming in Spain:

*“If I went to Spain, I would find a job immediately. I have 5 specialized areas in which I work. I am good in metal welding, carpentry, bricklaying, panel beating, and plumbing. God made it so that I can't have all I want; therefore I can't go to Spain. I will remain here until I die.”<sup>24</sup>*

Despite his resignation to staying at home, Ahmed is still willing to migrate to Europe with the next boat if he finds one. Ideally, he would like to go as a legal migrant, but the requirements are simply above his means and he cannot afford to pay for a visa through one of the illegal networks that act as go-betweens. In the previous chapters, we have seen how *marabouts* are used to facilitate migration and how migrants and families go to any lengths to ensure that they or their loved ones succeed in getting into Spain. But Ahmed's case shows another face of ‘*maraboutage*’; how his father, being a *marabout*, works together with other *marabouts* to ensure that his son does not stay away from him, because he is the chosen one to succeed him, and as such he must be at home to carry on his legacy. Apart from ‘*maraboutage*’, Ahmed believes that it is also the will of God, and so must not be challenged. This equally shows to what extent their beliefs are engrained in religion, aside from *marabouts*.

### **The family**

Ahmed's father refers to him as '*fil unique*' (only son), but in actual fact he has another brother, who is currently in Spain and was able to go with the blessing of his father. As for Ahmed, his father never wanted him to go because he had chosen him as his heir, as earlier mentioned. In all, Ahmed has five sisters and one brother, totalling seven children from their own mother. Their step-mother and her children lived in another compound that I never got to visit. None of the sisters work; three have moved to live with their spouses, while two are in the compound. Some are engaged in petty trade, while others depend on their spouses, like Saidou's wife (Saidou is the ex-military migrant). None of them went to school. According to Ahmed, the father was quite happy for the brother to travel, and he personally ensured that the journey would be a success, being a *marabout*.



*Part of Ahmed's family*

Six months after his departure, the father passed away. As the brother just travelled, he was still able to send home some money for the funeral arrangements. Nevertheless, Ahmed is not happy with his brother who, ever since he left, has sent him only 30,000 CFA francs to pay for a ram for *Tabaski*, but regularly sends money to his wife (Rhama). The returned migrants all acknowledge that they want to migrate to help their families, but in Ahmed's case the departure of his brother has not brought them help, nor has it changed the family's situation. What is sent to the wife she keeps for herself and looks to Ahmed to provide. Being the heir and the eldest son, he has no option but to provide for them. This in essence also responds to the question that migration is not a panacea because the intended goal that was at the heart of migration has not been achieved. Although he has not been able to send money to Ahmed regularly, the brother has nonetheless benefited from his departure as well. He was able to purchase the family house where they live and allow them to stay put.<sup>5</sup> His wife Rhama comes out as the main beneficiary, as she receives money regularly from her husband.

### **Successful migrants**

In his article "Notions of Bushfalling and Bushfallers in Cameroonian Diasporic Discourses", (forthcoming), Nyamnjoh likens successful migrants to hunters who go out to the city and the world beyond to hunt for game, and the village becomes the place where the spoils are brought or sent through returning hunters. This metaphoric use of hunters to refer to migrants is not a phenomenon limited to Cameroon; it is also well embedded in the African culture and, in particular, Senegal. Like the Cameroonian, a true 'Senegalese hunter' is expected to come home with a good 'catch', and it is only then that the migrant takes his rightful place in society as a true son of the soil, who has not sought to sever ties with the homeland. Ahmed therefore does not belong to the group of successful migrants, whereas his brother does: even though he provides only for his immediate family, he has bought a house for the extended family.

In this age of advanced information and communication technology, families need not wait for returning migrants, as the waiting period has been curtailed by the proliferation of money transfer agencies and even migrant transfer networks, or a simple

phone call. The story of Fatou, as we shall see later, clearly elucidates how success is considered and what is expected from a successful migrant.

Not only do those left behind rely on remittances, but their taste for consumer goods has also changed. As argued by Van Binsbergen (1999), complex urban consumerism, even by inhabitants of rural areas, is sustained by openness to international and global models of commodity consumption as they are locally represented through the media.

Taking the debater further, Featherstone (1993: 13) has convincingly indicated that consumerism is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production, which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption. In the case of Senegal, migration has no doubt given families the desire to aspire to the ranks of not merely window shoppers, but of consumers. However, I think consumerism in Senegal is informed by the culture of migration, and the latter has a ripple effect on the taste and choice of consumption.



*Investments of a succesful migrant  
back home*



Through their celebrated new status, there is not only the emotional pleasure of consumption, but also their dreams and desires, which are celebrated in consumer culture imagery, catapulting them from one social status to the other. This is as a result of the fact that 'commodities have the capacity to break down social barriers and dissolve the long-established links between persons and things' (Ibid, 1993: 17), and have come to be seen as a measuring rod for success. These are the sort of barriers migration is tearing down in Senegal; until now, land purchase, building a house and the consumption of certain goods have been reserved for the rich. But thanks to migration, those who dare to dream and aspire are able to consume goods that were once considered ostentatious. The first signs of change of status are often perceived in the change of looks in the bedroom with the purchase of a bedroom suite – a king-size bed, a huge wardrobe of about 3m by 3m, a dressing table, and a chest drawers.

When we visited Fatou – the mother of two sons in Spain, we found the house being refurbished.<sup>6</sup> In the course of our conversation, we were informed that the work was being done with money sent by her sons. Two weeks later, on another visit, the room was totally transformed with a new bedroom suite (but for a chest drawers) and a television with a DVD player. A fixed phone would be installed in the coming weeks. That would depend on how fast someone could follow it up with the service providers – SONATEL. In August, the room was complete with the installation of the phone. Following the standards set by departed migrants, this is what is expected of Fatou's sons and in keeping with the societal norms, they are seen as very successful migrants.

In the same connection, in December of 2008, when we visited Fatou again, we were lucky to be there when a parcel and photos arrived from Spain with some money meant for the feast of *Tabaski*. By now the community has classed them among the successful migrants, and when news of the pictures spread in the neighbourhood there was commotion as everybody wanted to see how much they have changed, and how 'Europeanised' they have become, given how much investment at home have been recorded against their names. The money that was meant for the feast of *Tabaski* came with clear instructions as to what amount is given to whom. Such celebrations provide an opportunity for migrants to display

continuous village loyalty, thus contributing to long-held traditions. But far more important and what gained a lot of recognition was the fact that they were able to fulfil the wish of their childless aunt by paying for her pilgrimage to Mecca for the Hajj. Fatou's family no doubt is an example of the success story of boat migration. The entire family sings the praises of those in Spain and continuously pray for their success in regularising their status as permanent residents. However, Fatou's nightmare is the thought that the son could get married to a Spanish woman. For her part, Soda has joined the group of happy women who every month are phoned to go to one of the money transfer agencies to collect money sent by her spouse from Spain. According to Soda, she is now able to buy the things that she was never able to when the husband was around. And as part of her newly gained status, Soda has taken to using skin lightening cream. In fact, of all the women interviewed whose spouses are in Spain, only one is yet to use the complexion-changing cream. According to them, it is to beautify themselves in anticipation of the day their husbands will come, or for photos that will be taken and sent. The latter case was witnessed with the wife in one of my host families. The woman's spouse is in Italy, as can be seen in the photos she sent him. The only problem Soda faces is missing him. Asked if she would want him to come back because she misses him and his lack of papers, the response was a vehement no. Although she misses him, coming home is far from imaginable, because this would stop her newly-found financial freedom and her ability to join the disciples of consumerism.

Like Fatou, Soda is in a gradual phase of changing her bedroom; she started by buying a huge bed and a dressing table. Prior to her husband's departure, they had just a mattress on the floor. This is the case with most fishers. Soda does not work; neither does she do any petty business to supplement the income from her husband. She has two children and lives with her parents. In the morning, she takes a sun bath till about 10 a.m. after which she prepares breakfast for the family. She prepares lunch when it is her turn to, but if not, she spends the day basking at the beach and after lunch she spends time with her peers whose spouses are also in Spain, presumably comparing notes. For most of the families we observed and talked to, their top priority when the money starts flowing is to buy a bed. These furniture items are of symbolic importance to them in the

sense that most start off with barely a mattress on the floor to call a bed, as indicated above. This is also because of the high cost of a bed, and their economic marginality does not permit them to purchase it. In addition, the fact that they live a hand-to-mouth life makes it difficult for them. Hence to show that change is imminent, they begin with the most basic item yet not affordable to all – a bed.

Similarly, in Van Binsbergen's (1999) portrayal of Mary's room, we note also that her first mark of social ascension is the purchase of a wardrobe, which was only possible through a rotating credit scheme with colleagues. Although Mary is thousands of miles away – in Botswana – from Senegal, her situation is no different from that of the fishers described here, as their commonality is the consumption goods that act as markers and that would eventually lead to a change of status in their respective societies. From this perspective, the consumption goods therefore are critically linked to their use as markers, thus confirming Bourdieu's view that "taste in cultural goods functions as a marker of class" (1984, cited in Featherstone, 1991: 88).

Fatima is another classic example of a spouse with a successful husband in Spain, but also a case that shows just how success can lead to family feuds over who gets what from the remittances. Fatima lives with her mother-in-law and the rest of her in-laws and has two sons. One has been sent to live with her sister-in-law so he can attend a good school, and she is left with the three-year-old. Her husband left for Spain in April 2005 when she was five months pregnant. (She would not allow any recording, and her responses were quite terse). When asked how she feels with her husband gone and the probability that he will be gone for at least five years, in a cracked voice and tears rolling down her cheeks she said "Coming back depends on God, so I don't know when we will be together again."<sup>7</sup> In spite of this, coming back is out of the question as she thinks that "It's better for him to remain there until he gets his papers. His going was no easy thing."<sup>8</sup>



*Wives and children of migrants in Spain who depend on remittances from their spouses  
(note their use of skin cream)*

Fatima's husband regularly sends home a monthly stipend for the family's upkeep, and besides that he sends the sum of 20,000 CFA francs to her for breakfast for Fatima and her three year old son.<sup>9</sup> Soon after his departure, he sent money with clear instructions as to what size of a bed should be bought – king size. Little wonder that, even in tears, she stressed that "there has been some change in our economic situation."<sup>10</sup>

At the upper section of the bed are two enlarged photos of her husband taken in Madrid; one to the right and the other to the left and interposed is one of Fatima. Also, there is extension work going on in the compound, and Fatima's room smells of fresh paint, indicating that it has just been renovated. Before the husband travelled, there was no running water in the compound; they used to fetch water from a public tap. But since his departure, water and a telephone have been installed. Recently, he sent her a cell phone, some handbags, two pairs of sandals and a watch. It is evident that Fatima's husband is one of the migrant success stories. But this notwithstanding, her mother-in law is not happy on the grounds that Fatima gets most of the benefits from the income, and the rest of the family is not looked after as much as Fatima is.

The climax of the dispute came when she received the cell phone. Her mother-in-law did not see the need for this as a fixed phone was installed not long ago. But Fatima thinks she needs it in order to have private conversations with her husband without the rest of the family listening, as has been the case. Fatima's case shows how, despite the clamouring to improve and diversify the strategy of income generation, it has come at a price – that of tearing the family apart, because the search for the very income that ironically has separated the family due to distance is set to actually separate them this time due to envy and greed.



*Another migrant's spouse and mother*

Coumba (see Chapter Five) is one of the visiting boat migrants that we were fortunate<sup>11</sup> to meet. He has constructed a huge, well-furnished house close to the ocean, and has two cars, of which one is for sale. The sort of consumer goods – cars, boat engines and cell phones – he brings home for sale already distinguish him as a successful migrant. As will be seen in the next chapter, his demeanour falls in accordance with that of a *modou modou* (baggy jeans, tight-fitting T-shirt, thick necklace and huge pendants). While there, his friends who came to visit were impressed with his iPod and cell phone – the latest Nokia N95, and he was contented to show off what functions and storage facilities it has to the utter delight of friends, who were not as lucky as he to have been allowed

into Spain. Judging from the number of friends who came to see him and how positively they all talked about his success within three years, it is patently clear, beyond any doubt, that he has made it.

Douglas and Isherwood (1980, in Featherstone, 1991: 17), have neatly categorised such consumers – as belonging to the category of a consumer of technological set corresponding to the secondary production sector (travel and the consumer's capital equipment), uplifting him from the first category of a staple set corresponding to the primary production sector (food). Before the coming of boat migration, prospective migrants could be said to occupy the lower strata of the social structure of consumer goods, thus being restricted to the consumption of the staple. But the coming of boat migration has changed all of this, as migrants are beginning their social ascent, and thus increasing the competition to acquire goods in the secondary production sector, such as the purchase of land, houses, and even identifying with musicians like Awadi or footballers like Diouf and Camara.

Success is therefore seen from different angles – from the migrant, through remittances, use of electronic gadgets, owning a car, construction projects and most especially through house ownership. To those left behind, their migrant relatives are measured from the change in lifestyle, change in taste in consumer goods – bedroom suite, and provision of basic amenities like water in the house. This is how one of my informants depicts success judging from what his friend's sons are doing back at home.

*"My neighbour's children have started sending money. They buy clothes and a house. Three days ago, one of my friend's children sent him a very sophisticated cell phone. He was even asked to find a house for sale. They had gone by sea; they have succeeded, and their family here are living well."*<sup>12</sup>

Yet another informant, Oumar, regrets not having listened to his sons when they sought his permission to travel and he refused, and part of his regret is never sending them to school. He added that if the clock could be turned back he would send all his children to school because in 1963 when he got married, they never saw the need for schooling as there was fish in abundance. He looks at how much his friends' sons in Spain are doing for the family; he cannot help but regret not allowing his sons to go. This is what he has to say:

*“My two sons advised me to let them go, but I refused. They told me if they succeeded they would work and send me money to complete the house. I refused outright. But today, when I see my friend in Kayar who had accepted the same proposal from his sons, I regret because they are now in Spain and send him money. He was a man who could not even feed his family, but today he has built his own house and lives well with his family, thanks to his sons. See my house, I started building it in 2000, but I have not been able to complete it because I depend on my sons to come back from fishing with money, but that will never be enough.”*(Saint Louis: 15/10/2008).<sup>13</sup>

Very often, such success comes at a price because those left behind, inasmuch as they do enjoy the change in status through their new tastes, they must still suffer the psychological and emotional pain of being separated from loved ones for an indefinite period of time, as seen through the wives. But the remarkable change is seen in their diet as money is specifically allocated for breakfast in the case of Fatima, and even Soda, as she is the one who controls all what is sent. The change is also visible in their desired goods, and marks them as the spouse of a *modou modou*. Soda, like Fatima, can afford not to engage in petty trading and to depend entirely on remittances. This is an aspiration which most families would like to attain.

However, success can lead to family rivalry, as seen in the case of Fatima and her mother-in-law. On the whole, migration has helped to reduce the number of unemployed; even though most were repatriated; a significant number still remain in Spain, as testified by informants.

### **Unsuccessful migrants/failed migration**

The term unsuccessful migration is used here to refer to those who were repatriated or to those who arrived in Spain and have been of no benefit to their families because they are unable to send home the remittances they had hoped to, while failed migration is used to refer to those who lost their lives on the way. Due to the random selection of those to be retained in Spain, not all migrants were lucky to have been selected to remain.

As regards unsuccessful migrants, in their edited volume *“Enjeux de l’émigration au Sénégal”*, students of Journalism – CESTI at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar maintained that in the

months of September and October 2006 alone 4,700 migrants were repatriated in 63 Spanish chartered flights (2007: 15; see also Fall, 2007: 15). In fact, all the investments that families made were in the hope that the migrants would be retained in Spain, hence being repatriated did not go down well with most families, and even with friends.

For instance, Mbacke is the lone survivor of a boat wreck and has attempted the journey three times and failed. His relationship with his father is at an all-time low because he has refused to listen to his father's advice against going despite the fact that his father wants him to be his heir and inherit the bulk of wealth he has accumulated. The father, on the other hand, considers him to be lazy because he does not want to go fishing despite the many boats he has, and he is forced to give his boats out to others to fish. Mbacke wants to migrate at all costs because his step-brother is already in Spain, and this makes him feel slighted in the eyes of his step-mother and children. Ever since his return, he has categorically refused to go fishing and has resigned himself to going often to Touba to seek help and protection from his *marabout* in order to meet an honest middleman who could help him secure a Spanish or Italian visa.

When I asked the father whether he was willing to pay for a visa for him, his response was "*ça c'est la folie*" (it is madness), and was adamant that his son would not succeed even if he got to Europe because he had failed in Senegal. He maintains that Mbacke should first show his mettle as someone who can succeed at home before making any venture out to where he does not know. Meanwhile, Mbacke is not overly worried by his father's objections and thinks that the latter has succeeded in life and therefore should give him a chance to succeed, no matter in which direction he wants to achieve success. His father is 74 years old and is well respected by his peers as a great fisher due to his accumulated wealth – houses, five boats, three nets and six engines. But because Mbacke has the backing of his mother, he has not yet given up on migrating.





*Mbacke: the lone survivor of a boat of 60 migrants*



*Mbacke's father*

For his part, Badara the middleman (see Chapter Two), has also failed on all three attempts to get to Spain. In his first two attempts, his boat ran into problems and he was rescued. It was only in the third attempt that he managed to arrive in Spain, but he was

repatriated. It is also interesting to note how he changed from denouncing the journey when it began to becoming an ardent migrant due to the success of his friends, "at first, I thought it was some sort of suicide and that they were mad; but finally, I changed my opinion. One year six months later, they started calling and building gradually."<sup>14</sup> He is not well regarded at home by his step-mother, who has low esteem for him for not trying to migrate like the others. Apparently, he hid his three previous journeys from her. He is very demoralised because of his failures, and in the course of the interview his mind wanders, and he tells me about his failures and what the success which has constantly eluded him is all about:

*"I am married and I have two children. We always have problems. Our life is limited to eating and escaping from death. There is pressure from the family, but that does not frighten me... It's difficult and I haven't succeeded. However, I know that I'll succeed one day. I believe in God. I have spent my money and lost my job. I have escaped death. And how can people ask me for justifications to return to work? We cannot have God without money. We can't live without money. If you don't have money, you can't adore God. We are all faithful children of God. Even to do what God wants, we need money. It's difficult to do anything without money. When you send 200,000 CFA francs during the feast of Tabaski, Korité or other feasts, people are happy and their prayers accompany you. But if you fail ..."* (Sally Portudal: 21/07/2008).<sup>15</sup>

From every indication, Badara is not a happy man due to his failures, although he tries to downplay his fears at the personal and family level. At the personal level, he is full of guilt for not succeeding like the others, and at the family level, he is unable to meet family expenses. He has not lived up to the expectations of a 'real macho' – to take care of the family and provide for their every need – and is slighted by his step-mother and abandoned by his wife. He has not been able to live up to the task, the more so because he is the eldest son in the family. As mentioned above, his wife finally abandons him and takes off with their two daughters, back to her parents' house. She is deeply disappointed that he fails repeatedly. According to her, he is possessed by ill-luck and needs spiritual cleansing – *bain mystique* (a mystical bath).

Badara himself does not understand why he cannot succeed given the fact that for every journey he has consulted a *marabout*, who asked him to perform costly sacrifices, such as slaughtering a ram and distributing it to *talibés* (students of the Koran) and sprinkling its blood on the boat and in the ocean. This in effect shows how charlatans have come up in the name of *marabouts* and deceived migrants by sending them to death in the name of protecting them while extorting huge sums of money from them. This also heralds the controversy that existed among *marabouts*, where some propagated the message of going to heaven in the event of death, while others termed it suicidal (see Chapter Five).

One may conclude that it is such charlatans who gave false hopes to migrants, encouraging them to attempt such perilous journeys because of the huge amount of money they stand to gain. But also take note of how graphically Badara presents his case. This is because migrants like him seem to have accepted the fact that they are marginal citizens, and use such imagery to draw attention and arouse sympathy. Perhaps because of his failures, he used such graphic imagery as a strategy to evade my questions as he did not want me to see through him. However, when he realised that I meant no harm, he gradually opened up.

The general tendency with unsuccessful repatriated migrants is that they do not want to return to fishing, and this has had an enormous strain on this sector, and the ramification is that there is a downturn in the family's income as well.

Nonetheless, all is not yet lost as there are some who, upon return, engage in their jobs or seek alternative jobs that are more beneficial than fishing. Such is the case with Bouba who, after two unsuccessful attempts to get to Spain, has resorted into illicit trade by buying sugar from The Gambia and selling it in Senegal. Having teamed up with his first conveyor, who is the boat owner, he and three other friends sail to The Gambia where they buy about 100 50-kg bags of sugar and sell in Senegal for double the price. According to Bouba, the business is quite lucrative. Given that they avoid paying custom duty on the goods, for every journey they make, they are sure to make a hundred percent profit. With a trip each week, business is good for him and his friends but for the bad days (which are rare) when they are caught by the customs and have to pay taxes.



*An elderly fisher forced to return to fishing because one son has refused to go back to fishing and other migrated to Spain*

As for the migrants I met in Dakar – Mohammed, Abdoulaye and Saliou – all traders, they have resumed their trade and although business is not as good as before, they are happy to be back. Nevertheless, they have not given up on migrating, not by boat this time; they are saving up to purchase a visa, if they meet the right middleman. With regard to Fallou and Malick, they abandoned fishing and chose to become *mareyeurs*. With the help of his family, the former was given some initial capital with which he buys sardines and takes to the villages nearby to sell to local women who retail it, while Malick buys and sells directly to exporters. It is also worthwhile to mention that when he was repatriated after three years of staying in Italy, the family was greatly saddened and consulted various *marabouts* to find out why he was sent back. As for Amadou, he has relocated to Nouadhibou with some friends to resume fishing because the sea there is more populated with fish than in Saint Louis.

### **“Sans papiers”**

As previously mentioned, there are some migrants who succeeded in going to Spain, but have met with disappointment. Since the perception they had about Europe has turned out to be a mirage, they are unable to send home the expected remittances.

According to most informants, a good number of migrants have expressed the wish to return to Senegal but are cautioned against coming because nothing has changed since their departure. Modou, who succeeded in sending three of his younger brothers, tell of how one of them was adamant he would like to return because life is very difficult – he had no job because he lacked a work or residence permit. Jobs could only be found when the work permits of regular migrants were rented at exorbitant fees.

Although it is not often that these migrants do get jobs, when they do, part of the remittance that they send home are used for consulting a *marabout* to perform sacrifices and for continuous prayers so they can succeed. At all levels of their lives, we notice that the presence of the *marabout* is conspicuous. When they succeed, it is thanks to the *marabout*, and they do not forget to send him gifts to ask for continuous intercession. When they are unsuccessful, they go back to find out what they did not do right, or seek a new *marabout* with the hope that he will be better than the previous one, or send family members to consult one in the case where they are already in Europe.

Besides, when some have explored all avenues and it is still difficult, they resort to a quick fix by getting married to a Spanish woman, like Coumba. The situation is so desperate that spouses also encourage their husbands to get married to Spanish women to come out of the impasse. Sokhna tells me how she suggested her husband get married to a Spanish woman so that his situation could be regularised, but he turned down the proposal and asked that she go to see a *marabout* to intercede for him. Sokhna was visibly unhappy as she later on told me that the hardship the husband is undergoing and the stories that he tells her about Europe every time he calls make her sad. She says:

*“Often, when he calls me, he tells me how difficult it is, especially since he has no papers – residence and work permits. He also says that Europe is more difficult than Senegal. For the moment, he sells cassettes in the street. Sometimes, policemen arrest people like him who have no papers. They give the little money they have to the policemen to gain freedom. Despite the difficulties, he continues to send me money.”*(Saint Louis: 24/09/08).<sup>16</sup>

Concurring with this, Libas tells me about friends of his, who each time they call him, complain about the difficulties and challenges they are facing:

*"They say it's because they don't have any papers. So far, they have no papers; they do petty trade and sell in the streets. When the police comes, they abandon their goods and run away. Even when they buy goods and the police comes, they run away. They have no papers, no jobs, no certificates; they had left like that, thinking that clandestine immigration was easy."* (Yarakh, 07/11/08).<sup>17</sup>

Libas is a security guard, and is married with two children. On all four occasions that he tried to go to Spain, their boat never left the shore as the police were called in by spies paid by the police. He is one of those whose mother sold her jewellery and land to pay for his trip on all four occasions.

Libas can probably afford to criticise his friends because he did not succeed in going or also because he is a bit educated, and feels once there, he will not be tardy in getting a job.

While some migrants can still manage to do petty trade, the story is grim for others, as they depend on the benevolence of the Association of Senegalese in Spain and on friends. Such is the case with Fama's husband, who left in 2006, and is unable to get either a job or enough income to start off as a meaningful hawker in order to send remittances back home. Fama has asked him to stop sending even what little money he used to send her and try to save so he can start off as a hawker. This means that Fama has to work with her mother-in law as a *mareyeuse* to meet the family's need and send the children to school, and also deal with the absence of her husband. They buy and sell fish by the beach and also supply to exporters, but not much, as they lack the capital to do so. Fama looks very frail and the children untidy, but all seem to be happy. She is 28 years old, and was 13 when she got married and has five children. When I asked how old her husband was, the response was that she did not know. In their home, the strain is even clearer with all the children sharing a single bedroom with just two mattresses on the floor as beds, and the general appearance of the house is not tidy. The very essence of going to Europe was to help the family and to renovate the house, which her husband has failed to do because the El Dorado he had risked everything for has turned out to be a mirage.

In spite of their sadness, it is puzzling to note that none of these women (Fama and Fatima) would take the bold step of asking their spouses to return home. Rather, they are prepared to wait for as long as it would take for them to have legal status that would permit them to come in and out of Spain. Even the men whom I interviewed were quick to identify whose husband is taking care of his family from Spain and who is not. They seem to share the opinion that Fama has been abandoned by her husband, but respect her for her hard work and steadfastness. This is part of the trauma that is brought to bear on the families, living with such a high degree of uncertainty, not knowing when their loved ones will ever come back. All they can turn to is photos as a reminder. But again, we see that Fama, unlike Soda and Fatima, has not benefited from her spouse's migration, as things have not changed for her family. Her resilience is pinned on hope that one day things will get better for him, and it is only then that her dreams will be fulfilled.

The spouses who receive monthly incomes from their husbands are admired by friends and women whose husbands did not succeed. For instance, Libas' wife continuously alluded to the fact that her problems would be eased if her husband had migrated like her friends' husbands.

On the other hand, those who did not make it to the Canaries have left behind indelible scars on their families and widows. Their failed attempt to reach Spain is a constant reminder of just how treacherous boat migration is. The hardest hit neighbourhoods were Yarakh and Thiaroye-Sur-Mer (Ba, 2007; Fall, 2008). Talking to journalism students of CESTI (*"Enjeux de l'Immigration au Sénégal"*, 2007: 18) the Spanish Minister of Interior says the official figure of bodies recovered from the sea or those that were washed ashore stands at 590. Listening to the stories from the migrants, one gets the feeling that the death toll is in the thousands. However, whatever the exact number of casualties, the accurate figures cannot be known given how widespread clandestine migration has been and also given the fact that the boats left from different countries. But what is certain is that the casualty left behind is enormous. For instance, Mbacke tells me of his ordeal during which, out of 60 passengers in a boat, he was the lone survivor thanks to the fact that he was able to cling to an empty plastic gallon of fuel and was rescued by a fishing boat two days later. Pape confirms that on all the three

occasions that he captained a boat to Spain, they registered a number of deaths. It is partly by talking to returned migrants that we can begin to calculate the number of deaths.

Nevertheless, today Yacine is one of those who would join Mbacke to give testimonies about the price she and her children have paid as a result of boat migration. She is now a widow and was informed by friends of her husband that the boat he left in did not make it to Spain. Ever since, her life has changed as she has to fend for herself and two children – one of whom is epileptic, and the younger three years old, with whom she was six months pregnant when the husband phoned on 27 August 2006 to inform her that he would be leaving that night for Spain.

Seventeen days later, her worst nightmare was confirmed. All the passengers on board their boat died as a result of rough seas. She is been unable to tell the children where their father is because she still has not come to terms with his death. According to her, their standard of living was better when he was alive, for he lived and worked in Nouadhibou in Mauritania and would send her money every fortnight. But since his death, she has to do the petty business of selling food to support herself and the children. To her, her life has changed forever. Yacine is 30 years old and lives in the family house with her sisters and aunt. She shares a single room – averagely furnished – with her two children. She is very shy and barely speaks French; through the interpretation of her elder sister, I was able to conduct the interview. But I must admit it was one of the most difficult interviews I conducted. As soon as we started, tears began streaming down her cheeks; although I offered to stop, she insisted it was okay, she would like to tell me her story even though she would not allow it to be recorded. Her insistence on telling her story, I suppose, was part of a healing process and very therapeutic. In the course of the interview, there were long moments of silence and I chose not to pressurize her given the circumstances, but rather to listen to the silence and watch her tears rolling down. These moments, I realised, were when she was expressing her continuous grief and contemplating the challenges that lies ahead. But also I think it was a moment of connection between us, for by the end of my research she gradually opened up and talked more about herself and her challenges and aspirations. She hopes to remarry one day



but would not like to move in with the husband, given that her room brings back memory of her dead husband, and she would like to hold on to those memories for as long as possible.

In Kayar, I also met Awa, whose husband failed to reach Spain. She agreed to tell her story but soon after we started the interview, her grief was such that I called it off. In January 2009, when I went back, I was told she had just remarried and moved to Joal with her new husband – a fisherman as well.

From these stories of failed migrants, the slogan *Barça* or *Barzak*<sup>18</sup> becomes clearer; it depicts clearly how determined migrants were to get to Europe, even if it meant sacrificing their lives. The sub-human conditions the migrants were subjected to in the boats is worth mentioning; no proper sanitation, with passengers having to answer nature's calls in front of others, or sitting in very cramped conditions. This explains why, upon arrival, most migrants have to be taken into medical care. Even the Europe some of them had dreamed of was transmuted into refugee camps as most of them had to be repatriated.



*The grave of a migrant fished out of sea at Kayar*

## Conclusion

Boat migration, as described by some informants, was a Godsend and has helped to change the lives of most families forever. But for others, it is a bleak story that will always remind them of the woes of boat migration. In the pursuit of change in status, the families left behind do not perceive their physical separation; rather, the separation seems to be more psychological, while their craving for remittances and new consumer goods supersedes even that feeling of psychological separation. The story is the same in the other migrant communities, where emphasis is laid on consumerism rather than on the physical separation. In Saint Louis and M'bour, from where a lot of migrants come, there is a visible change in lifestyle and a heightened desire for improved lifestyle and acquisition of houses and land. But in Yarakh and Thiaroye-Sur-Mer, which registered a high number of deaths and unsuccessful migrations, families, especially mothers, have been left with the guilt of having sent their sons to their precipitated death by financing their journey. Here, success stories are few, hence the reason why the photos from Fatou's sons caused commotion in the neighbourhood.

Besides, the infusion of migrants' money has not only elevated the standards of living but also the standards of religious celebrations, all of which have set in motion a standard that must be upheld by migrant families. Celebrations have grown in size, hence more financially demanding. But for those whose story is that of repatriation or living in Spain as illegals without a permanent job, their financial status is grim, and life is a constant struggle to take care of their families at home, as is the case with Fama.

## Notes

1. « Tu es mon fils unique et je ne peux pas te laisser partir. Et je ne suis pas sûr si tu reviendras. Je lui ai expliqué que c'était pour trouver les moyens et l'aider la famille mais il ne veut rien comprendre. Contre son gré, je suis parti jusqu'en Côte d'Ivoire ; il m'a fait revenir. Je suis reparti au Togo et au Ghana. Quand je suis revenu et que d'autres facilités se sont présentées, il a refusé que je m'en aille. Je suis parti à la campagne à Walo pour trouver les bains mystiques. Mais il a refusé que je m'en aille parce que je suis son oeil, son pied et sa force. Mais sa parole lui appartiendra jusqu'à la fin de sa vie. Mais il m'a dit si tu n'y

crois pas, il faut partir. Partout où tu seras tu reviendras et tu ne sauras pas ce qui te fera revenir. Je n'ai pas encore pu partir, la force et l'expérience sont encore là. Je devais devenir quelqu'un, mais Dieu seul sait ce qu'il me réserve. Il a laissé une caisse, il m'a conseillé d'apprendre pour m'en servir. Je suis parti jusqu'au bout du monde. Mais à chaque fois il me faisait revenir. Il pensait qu'une fois à l'étranger je ne reviendrais jamais et qu'il allait me perdre. »

2. « Mon père me demanda si je voulais partir. Je lui ai dit non. C'était la 7ème pirogue que je construisais et qui arrivait en Espagne. Le voyage était programmé un samedi. Quand on le lui a dit, il a refusé. Finalement, il décida de me laisser partir. Trois heures de temps avant d'arriver en Espagne, la pirogue s'est fissurée. Les gens que je récupérai, les planches ont coupé mon corps. Une tante l'avait prédit. Par la suite, on décida de revenir. Nous sommes revenus vers 5 heures du soir, c'était à Nouadhibou. On évacuait ceux qui étaient malades. Ils étaient étalés comme des moutons, tard je reviens à Guédiawaye vers 5 heures de matin. Je demandai à la femme de mettre du karité sur mon dos. Quand mon père entra, il ria. Je lui dis qu'il était responsable de mon retour. Il avoua que c'était vrai. Il ne voulait pas me perdre pour toujours. Il a fait la bénédiction, mais il n'était pas content. »
3. « Quand je lui envoyai de l'argent il le dépensait pour me faire revenir. Il ne voulait pas de cet argent, il voulait que je reviens. J'étais avec une fille que j'ai abandonnée parce que son père était au courant que je partirai. Si mon père ne m'avait pas retenu, j'aurais réussi en ce moment. Mon père pensait que j'allais me perdre. Partout où j'étais je ne pourrai pas poursuivre mon chemin parce que mon père ne m'avait pas autorisé. À partir de la Sierra Leone, je voulais me rendre en Espagne. Par la suite la personne qui devait m'amener a contacté mon père. Il lui a dit que j'étais aux portes de l'Espagne. Je suis resté 7 mois à Las Palmas. Mon parent m'a fait avaler une potion, qu'il a envoyée dans une lettre, qui m'a fait revenir. Si ce n'était pas cela, je serais parti du Sénégal depuis très longtemps. Ils ne voulaient pas de mon argent. Ils préféraient ma présence. Ce que je leur envoyais, leur permettait de payer des marabouts pour me faire revenir. Quand j'attendais deux mois avant de les téléphoner, ils se fâchaient pour me dire que je devais revenir. Si je ne reviens pas, ils me feraient revenir. Je n'ai jamais pensé que mon père me retiendrait de cette façon. Je ne pouvais le savoir, mais maintenant que tous les deux (père, mère) sont morts, je suis leur remplaçant. Je suis chef de famille. »

4. « Si je partais en Espagne. Je trouvais automatiquement du travail. Il y a 5 spécialités dans ma tête. Je maîtrise la soudure métallique, la menuiserie, maçonnerie, tôlerie montage et plomberie également. Dieu a fait que tout ce que je voulais, je ne peux pas l’avoir, donc je ne peux pas partir. Je resterai jusqu’à ce que la mort me trouve là.»
5. According to Muslim tradition, when a father dies, his property is sold and the proceeds shared among the children. Ahmed’s brother decided to buy it in order that the family should be together, but still went ahead and shared the money.
6. Painters were busy painting and carpenters were measuring the wall for a wardrobe.
7. « Le revoir dépend de Dieu, donc je ne sais pas quand on se reverra.»
8. « Il est préférable qu’il reste jusqu’à ce qu’il trouve les papiers. Ce qui lui a emmené c’est ne pas des farces. »
9. He has not seen the son given that he left while Fatima was five months pregnant.
10. « mais économiquement, il y a un changement »
11. Usually when they are visiting, they are so busy either trying to sell goods they have brought, like Coumba, or overseeing construction work that started in their absence.
12. « Les enfants de mon voisin ont commencé à envoyer de l’argent. Ils achètent des habillements et des maisons. Il n’y a même 3 jours, un des enfants de mon ami, lui a envoyé des portables très sophistiqués. En même il lui dit de trouver une maison à vendre, il va payer cela. Ils sont partis par la mer, ils ont réussi, et la famille ici gagne bien leur vie. »
13. « Mes deux fils m’ont conseillé de les laisser partir mais j’ai refusé, ils me disaient que s’ils réussent, ils vont travailler et m’envoyer de l’argent pour compléter la maison. J’ai carrément dis non. Mais aujourd’hui quand je regarde mon ami à Kayar qui avait accepté la même proposition de ses fils et maintenant ils sont en Espagne et ils envoient de l’argent. C’était quelqu’un qui ne pourrait pas nourrir sa famille, mais aujourd’hui il a construit sa propre maison et il vit bien avec sa famille grâce à ses fils. Regarde ma maison; j’ai commencé depuis 2000, mais je n’arrive pas à terminer parce que je dépends de mes fils de revenir de la pêche avec l’argent, mais jamais ça ne suffit pas. »

14. « Auparavant je pensais que c'était un suicide, qu'ils étaient des fous; mais finalement je n'ai tardé à déchanter. Un an six mois après ils ont commencé à téléphoner, à construire petit à petit. »
15. « Je suis marié et j'ai deux enfants. On a tout le temps des problèmes. Notre existence se limite à manger et échapper à la mort. Il y a les pressions de la famille mais cela ne me fait pas peur ... C'est difficile, et je n'ai pas réussi. Mais je suis convaincu qu'un jour je réussirai. Je crois en Dieu. J'ai dépensé mon argent, j'ai perdu mon travail. J'ai échappé à la mort. Et comment est ce qu'on peut me demander des justifications pour retourner au travail? . . . On ne peut avoir Dieu sans avoir de l'argent. On ne peut pas faire sa vie sans argent. Si tu n'as pas de l'argent tu ne pourras adorer Dieu. On est tous des fidèles enfants de Dieu. Même pour faire ce que Dieu nous recommande, on ne pourra pas y arriver sans argent. C'est très difficile de faire quoi ce soit sans argent. Envoyer 200.000 francs pendant la fête de Tabaski, la Korité, les fêtes, les gens sont contents et leurs prières t'accompagneront, mais si tu échoues... »
16. « Souvent, quand il m'appelle il dit comment c'est difficile, surtout comme il n'a pas les papiers – la permit de travail et la carte de séjour, et que l'Europe est plus difficile que le Sénégal. Pour l'instant, il est commerçant dans la rue, il vend les cassettes. Parfois, les policiers font les arrestations pour les gens comme lui qui n'ont pas des papiers. Le peu d'argent qu'ils ont, ils donnent aux policiers pour acheter leur libération. Malgré la difficulté, il envoie quand même de l'argent. »
17. « Ils disent parce qu'ils n'ont pas de papiers. Jusqu'à présent ils n'ont pas de papiers, ils font un petit commerce: ils vendent dans les rues. Quand la police vient, ils abandonnent leurs marchandises pour s'enfuir. Même quand ils achètent des marchandises, quand la police arrive ils s'enfuient. Ils n'ont pas de papiers, ni de travail, ni de diplômes, ils sont partis comme cela pensant que la clandestinité est facile. »
18. This was a slogan used by migrants to mean that either they arrive in Barcelona – Barça – or they die – Barzak.



## Chapter Five

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### Perceptions of Europe and ideologies about migration

#### Introduction

According to Kosinski & Prothero (1975), migration takes place when an individual decides that it is preferable to move rather than to stay, and where the difficulties of moving seem to be more than offset by the expected rewards. While this is true, the phenomenon of boat migration was to a large extent fuelled by the successes of those who arrived and were admitted into Spain. In addition, the perceived achievements of return migrants (*revenants*), who indulge in ostentatious consumption, and of how much wealth, power, and esteem they command amongst friends and family was another motivating factor. The would-be migrants' aspiration is to be like their friends with a changed status. (Ba, 2007: 5; Riccio, 2005: 104). According to Riccio (2005: 105), *Modou Modou* or *Baol Baol* (migrants), are seen as contemporary heroes. He summarises this idea thus: "migrants become models to be imitated and a source of inspiration" (2005: 107).

This chapter examines the perceptions and ideologies surrounding migration, and in the process we get a grasp of the reasons for migrating. The chapter argues that migration is enshrined in the socio-cultural life of the people, and as such is a learnt social behaviour; people learn to migrate (using social networks) and they learn to desire to migrate. As much as I agree that migration is partly a result of poverty, poverty alone cannot be postulated as the sole reason for migrating. Migrants' perceptions of Europe and successful migrants, as well as the ideologies about migration, are really what give prospective migrants the urge to venture across the sea to reach Europe. Apart from the above, the perceived invincibility of the *marabouts'* *grigri* and prayers have also been a driving force for migrants, given how much they rely on the *marabouts* for the success of the journeys. Returning to the issue of poverty, this model is focused on using the push-pull concept to ground its arguments. Acknowledging the insights the model has contributed to the understanding of leaving from A to B, I shall argue that viewing

poverty as the main cause of boat migration is inconsistent with evidence that the migrants are not among the poorest, given how much is invested in migration. Migration is not simply about economic success, but also about status and marriage networks at home. These two concepts are linked and have become primordial in how Senegalese migrants' identities are defined by their community and by the migrants themselves. Pursuing this line of thought, I will also explore to what extent this socio-cultural repertoire has influenced a 'culture of migration' which can also be linked to the macho culture.

Ali is eloquent on the culture of migration: "the culture of migration is those ideas, practices and cultural artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. This includes beliefs, desire, symbols, myth, education, celebrations of migration in various media, and material goods" (2007: 39). The experiences of my field research, however, confirm exactly what Ali (2007) reports about migrants in Hyderabad, as the same applies to Senegalese boat migrants. As much as this culture of migration has become embedded in the Senegalese society, there are those who choose not to migrate, creating in essence a counter discourse of non-migration (Ibid, 2007).

The migrant community under study in this research – the fishermen – has a culture of migration that has existed as long as the community (Bonnardel, 1992: 231-232; Camara, 1968). The fishermen migrate seasonally, following the migratory movements of the fish, to the Casamance region, M'bour, Kayar, Joal and further afield to Mauritania, The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra-Leone for months before returning to their base for a few weeks of rest, and so the cycle continues. As empirical studies have shown, failure to comply with such practices leads to the person being considered as lazy and lacking social standing amongst kin and peers. This is particularly true of the migrant fishing communities under study, where initiation is said to be complete when one is able to go fishing for weeks (Camara, 1968).<sup>1</sup> Since migration is part of their culture, it is but normal that when boat migration began in the early 2000s, they formed a majority of those who migrated.



A similar finding by Pfaff (2007:85) among the Zanzibari shows how “mobility is seen as a crucial part of their life, and is considered as necessary, not only to secure one’s livelihood but, also to feel like a ‘proper’ Zanzibari”. Although Pfaff is referring to the young Arab traders, the same holds true for Senegalese migrants, because those who failed to reach Spain or were repatriated, first of all have a sense of shame and guilt of failure, and are not highly regarded by family and friends. This not only defines who they are, but it is also an identity marker, and shapes the way they interact among peers and how they are perceived by their society and family. Badara, thirty-three years old, who abandoned his job in order to migrate, was repatriated successively in 2005, 2006 and 2007. As a result of his failure to enter Spain, he was abandoned by his wife because she could not understand why others were succeeding but he was unable to make it on three occasions, and attributes it to ill luck. For fear he may transmit his ill luck to their two daughters, she moved back to her parents’ house. Failure in his case is not tolerated by the wife, who thinks he is not doing enough to migrate. He gives a succinct view on how migration is considered in the Senegalese society:

*“It is a big victory to be a migrant who speaks Italian or Spanish. It is a symbol of success and social ascension. You make much money and get married to a white. You build a family house. When you return, everyone comes to visit you, and it is a great honour and brings happiness. It’s as if you became popular suddenly. Even if you buy clothes for 3000 francs at the Sandaga Market in Dakar, people will think that you brought them from abroad, from Spain. Badara is an Italian. He is far more successful than a teacher and everyone else. You are privileged and people are fooled in this way. It’s God who wanted it this way. People like travelling; it is somewhat embedded in the culture.”*(Interview, Sally Portudal: 27/07/08).<sup>2</sup>

To the migrants, migrating symbolises the importance of becoming and belonging, for a person only belongs when he gains the status of a migrant. Failure is heavily frowned on, like in Badara’s case. In another incident, Fama’s family is instigating her to abandon her husband who, despite his three attempts to migrate, did not as much as succeed to leave the point of departure, as the police moved in time to stop them from migrating. His successive failures are not

condoned by the wife's family which wants to put an end to the marriage even though they have two children. Inability to migrate means that this family cannot move up the social ladder through him and dissolving the marriage shows to what extent relationships are built and maintained around migration and migrants. In the same vein, Sall, thirty-four years old, made four attempts from Nouadhibou, through the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, as well as from different points of departure, but was repatriated. He is often laughed at by peers for allowing himself to be deceived<sup>3</sup> when he was settling in Spain. Many repatriated migrants tell of how useless they feel not being able to have stayed in Spain and have to cope with demands from family, who think that they are not doing enough to explore other possibilities, especially when they see what other migrant sons are doing for their families. The polygamous nature of the society promotes a culture of rivalry wherein the departure of the son of one wife makes the other do all within her power for her son to migrate as well. As argued by Schmitz (2008), and Ba (2007), this rivalry between wives is a result of the cultural attachment to migration, for migration of the respective sons invariably affects the mother's social standing in the community and in their household in the eyes of their spouse. Friends with marriageable daughters seek to position themselves to find favour with them, so that when the time comes for their sons to get married, their daughters might be considered. Also, women refuse to give their daughters to suitors at home, preferring to wait for migrants

### **Migrants' perception of Europe and imagined migration**

*"When I watch the TV and I see Europe, it is as if I should enter the TV. Since I was a child, I have always dreamt of going to Europe. Europe is beautiful; there is wealth and a lot of opportunities."*(Saint Louis 24/09/08).<sup>4</sup>

This quote by Mbacke, 28 years old and a lone boat survivor out of sixty passengers, is reminiscent of how most migrants perceive Europe. Europe to them is depicted as El Dorado, a land of affluence, which once attained will solve their problems because *"l'Europe c'est l'euro"* [Europe is the Euro] and by going to Europe they will be able to earn hard currency with which projects can be realised back home. Most would-be migrants are already exposed

from childhood to older relatives who migrate in search of work and often return with lots of investments. Mbacke confirms that his desires to migrate began from childhood as he watched his uncle who would come home from France on vacation; he was struck by the close attention that was paid to him and by how during his stay, everything revolved around him. His home-coming was often marked by celebrations. The way his uncle behaved mesmerized him, and this immediately heightened his desire to migrate. As Thoorsen (2007) points out, these didactic images, together with utopic fantasies and imaginaries would-be migrants nurture, form part of the enthralling stories migrants tell of their lives in the city and of Europe. But also the importance given to migration discourses by the Senegalese community reveals how migration and migrants are revered by the society, especially by would-be migrants (Fieldnotes, M'bour: 05/09/08). Issa, 28 years old and a high school dropout after two unsuccessful attempts to obtain his Baccalaureate, is now a *mareyeur*. He sheds more light on how the discourse on migration has gone unchecked and has resulted in the risk-fraught scenario of boat migration because "*la famille la plus cool c'est celle avec beaucoup des modou modou*" [the coolest families are those who have many *modou-modou*], reiterating the society's perception about migration and the status ascribed to it by the society. Every family aspires to have at least one person in Europe in order to belong and to respond to social demands. According to Issa, would-be migrants are denied the truth about the challenges of the journey, and have simply been given information based on the success stories and ignoring the grim side of migration. The journey is simplified and it becomes "*passer par la pirogue, dépasser la mer et d'être à l'autre côté de là et tu travailles et envoyer l'argent à ta famille*" [use a pirogue, cross the sea to the other side, work and send money to your family]. Arguing along similar lines but grounding his case in a longitudinal study of Cameroonian migrants in the Diaspora, Nyamnjoh deprecated the tendency whereby even when would-be migrants are told the truth about the realities of Europe; they are oblivious to it and are blinded by their dreams: "when you try to discourage them that life here as an asylum seeker is very difficult, they do not seem to believe and often question why you are not coming home" (2005: 263).

While a few migrants do talk about the realities of Europe, the general trend has been to conceal the truth from boat migrants, thus making them a "victim of their dreams and deceits about life in Europe by African migrants living in Europe" (Khadi Hane, forthcoming). She goes on to say that the day migrants will tell the truth to would-be migrants, the desire to migrate will disappear. Basing their judgement upon the stories they are told, they believe "Europe is an El Dorado, elsewhere is always better than one's home; they are ready to withstand any dangers to realize their dreams. It is only at the end of the trip that they come face to face with reality: nobody wants them in their country."<sup>5</sup> (Ibid, forthcoming). By the same token, Nyamnjoh & (2002) Page hold that, "perceptions of whites and *whiteman kontri* are shaped more by stereotypes, fantasies and utopia than by the reality of whites and human beings seeking comfort in contexts of uncertainties even for the apparently well placed".

Boat migrants have deeply rooted perceptions and imaginations of Europe as a place full of opportunities, where one gets equal pay for equal work and this would permit a migrant to save enough money faster to return home and invest. In pursuit of the nirvana that they want to attain and see for themselves, they have failed to listen and accept the version about Europe that does not conform to their own notion of Europe. Saidou, 44 years old and recently remarried, quit the military in order to migrate but failed; he sums up his views of Europe as follows:

*"In any case, life in Europe is better than here... In Europe, it is better than in Africa because there you can earn and save money. Indeed, there you can live well; there are no problems. You eat well, and you sleep well. You have no worries. You can even buy a car for a little amount of money. Here, a car costs between six and seven million francs."* (Interview, Yarakh: 16/07/07).<sup>6</sup>

A similar sentiment is shared by Yussuf, a 32-year old telephone booth operator (a family business) who quit his studies after completing secondary school. He contends that Europe is a paradise on earth and that:

*"Europe is a demi-paradise; the people who live in Europe, when they die they resurrect and go to paradise. They feel at home there, but us in Africa, when we die and go to paradise we stay awake."* (Interview, Saint Louis: 23/09/08).<sup>7</sup>

This theme is also explored by Thorsen in his article “Junior-Senior Linkages: Youngsters’ Perceptions of Migration in Rural Burkina Faso” (2007). He x-rays how migrants are fed by their illusions of the city and how easy they think it is for them to get a job once they arrive (Ibid, 182). Although his focus is on Burkina Faso youths migrating to the city and to Abidjan, the same can be said of the boat migrants who leave Senegal with the same idyllic ideas about getting a job in Europe but are soon confronted by the harsh reality of Europe. Modou was able to send three of his brothers to Spain in 2006 because he strongly believes life is better in Europe than in Senegal and, what is more, he is certain that once they arrive, they will get jobs and the family’s livelihood will change. But things have not gone as Modou envisaged for the brothers are in and out of work, at times they are street vendors, subject to arrests by the Spanish police. Modou admits this was not his image of Europe; he had hoped life would be better for the family. One of the brothers even expressed the desire to come back home, but was met with strong objection from Modou, who thinks that like a man he should fight to the end. Having braved the sea to Europe, he should be able to endure the hardship of Europe and it would be ‘unmanly’ to come back.

Admittedly, human beings do make conscious decisions about their lives, but perceptions and imaginations seem to be at the fore. They are now central to all forms of agency as concerns boat migration and have become social facts. This is because humans dare to dream, and after they dream they pursue those dreams. The actualisation of a dream takes more than mere relocation; it takes perseverance and undying hope, a strong will to survive, the willingness to be an alien, to be away from one’s comfort zone, and the readiness to thrive where nothing is taken for granted. Most of the fishermen made it no secret that they have for years, even from childhood, nurtured ambitions of migrating, but due to lack of funds, put their dreams on hold. But when the opportunity presented itself, the dreams were reignited.

### **Appropriating knowledge, language and attitude**

migration entails exposure to new ways of thinking and doing, and thus a reappraisal of life back home. Return is not so much about recapturing an idealized past as it is about forging the future. Stack

(1996) summarizes it for us when he states that "you can go back. But you don't start from where you left it. To fit in you have to create another place in that place you left behind" (in McHugh, 2000: 77). This in effect is the aspiration of every migrant – to come back different from what they were at first.

As much as would-be migrants are lured by the dreams and imagined opportunities, they are also very much preoccupied by the personal advantage of acquiring new skills and a new language. For someone like Yussuf (would-be migrant), going to Europe will give him the means to complete his studies, as he regrets having dropped out of school, to learn new ways in life and language and to upgrade himself. Repatriated or would-be migrants often make reference to friends who have returned on holidays, of how much they have changed physically and 'intellectually'. Upon return, they do not spend time making tea (*ataya*) which takes much of the day, but are instead very much involved in the projects they have come to undertake. To them, as Yussuf puts it, time is money. They look cultured and are knowledgeable about the world, unlike before, when they did not even know what was happening within the country. Many of them also acknowledge that by migrating, they would not only be able to acquire a new language and learn new skills to take back home for future use, but their whole demeanour will also change for the better.

These interviews echo the optimism and importance attached to what would be gained from migrating, for their dreams, as regards this change of status, are propelled by what they see from return migrants. They place particular stress on the need to acquire a new language, given that they have missed out on learning French since they did not go to school. Hence, learning a new language would be a tool for reasserting themselves by showing off the new language skills they have acquired and which the others do not have. For instance, as we went round during interview sessions, my research guide would often want to show off his 'Spanish skills' by speaking to fellow repatriated migrants, to the admiration of onlookers. It is only at these moments that they can have a sense of pride, given that they are not generally well regarded in their society because of their failed attempts to migrate.

Similarly, Thierno, who lived in Italy for three years before being repatriated, was very proud to show off his Italian language skills when he received a phone call from a friend in Italy. After the call, many friends were repeating the few words they could pick out from his conversation and asking to know their meaning. For a while, our interview stopped and his attention was diverted to translating for them from Italian to Wolof. For a brief moment, one could tell how proud he felt about the keen attention by his friends, who evidently wanted to learn more.

### **Europe/migration as a safety valve**

Migration often seems to work like a safety valve to relieve the pressure of a pressing problem rather than to resolve it. When yesterday's elites use their power and privilege to lock in their position and thus to stifle potentially threatening innovations, then the economy will stagnate and young people will not be able to find jobs that will utilise their skills and engage their ambitions. Migration provides the ambitious and skilled with individual exits. It helps to 'export' the unemployment problem. Overall, it relieves the pressure to change the structural barriers to improving the business climate. (Ellerman, 2003: 16, cited in Wabgou, 2008: 156).

This view expressed by Ellerman partially sums up why migration is on the rise, as shall be seen in the paragraph that follows.

The continuous demands and pressures from the family has made migrants see Europe as a place to where one can escape from the family, and seek refuge and freedom away from the demands of the family and socio-cultural engagements, which are cumbersome and hinder personal development. This notion is shared by Ass, who thinks that the excessive demands of their families inhibit people from saving and planning for the future. The fact that he is looked up to as the eldest son and has to provide 3,500 CFA francs for daily expenses means that he cannot save, and they basically live a hand-to-mouth life – *'au jour le jour'*. Saving some money can only be achieved if his wives are economical in their demands.<sup>8</sup> Dieng, for his part, is categorical about his desire to migrate: "I want my freedom", *"je veux ma liberté"*. He, like the others, would like to emigrate in order to escape from the pressures and be able to save some money. In the same vein, Seck thinks that the problem arises not only with the immediate family, but is also due to the socio-

cultural demands placed on them as sons, particularly eldest sons, because society requires that they uphold certain norms and values, especially that of sharing. Seck sells artefacts and is a tour guide in M'bour. Hence, his business is seasonal. When I met him, he was much occupied with buying a ram for the christening ceremony of his new born baby, and making all the necessary arrangements for the feast. The norms and customs demand that eight days after the birth of a child, a christening ceremony must be organised. It includes the sacrifice of a ram. The problem, according to him, is that the society and family do not seek to find out if the father can procure all the expenses. They are much more concerned about the tarnished family image that would result if the ceremony were not held; the mother continuously reminds the sons not to let down a long-standing tradition in the family. Such expenditure, required even when one barely ekes a living or when business is at its lowest ebb, is one of the major cultural hurdles sons have to deal with if they can make any meaning of their current situation. At the same time, we should bear in mind that the Senegalese society dwells a lot on '*teranga*', which advocates a communal lifestyle based on Koranic teachings. Many are becoming weary of this tradition, although they would want to maintain it; some see it as an impediment to human development.

Thus, going to Europe is perceived as a safety net where young men could escape the socio-cultural demands placed on them. But again, Europe has a nuanced double meaning because as much as they want to escape this impeding customs and family demands, they also believe that while in Europe, they could earn enough money to upgrade the status of these customs and give them another meaning – one that has been redefined by migrants' excessive expenditure.

### **Perception of successful migrants**

By and large, the appearance, investments and lifestyle of returned migrants play an important role in spurring those left behind and nursing ambitions to migrate (Ali, 2007; Haas, 2007; Thorsen, 2007; Castles & Miller, 2003). As much as boat migration has remained uncertain, there are migrants who have profited from it as a result of not only having reached Spain, but of having been able to get jobs and work/resident permits. Others have succeeded in obtaining



a 'white passport' by contracting 'marriage' with Spanish women, and yet others have been fortunate to stumble on a benevolent employer who helps them in securing the permits. However, whatever method is used in obtaining these documents is not of interest to the family left behind, as they are only preoccupied with the migrants' success. This would probably explain why wives back in Senegal form a majority of those instigating their spouses to get married to Spanish women in order to ease the process of obtaining documents.

Success to a Senegalese migrant and his family is often measured in terms of how much material wealth is accumulated, such as houses, cars, business investments, financial donations and gifts, as well as ostentatious consumption. In the course of the research, I came across two 'successful' migrants who came on holiday – one with a Spanish wife and another who had come to spend a longer time with his new bride, whom he saw briefly during the wedding, and the family. Although they both declined to be interviewed, from my observation of them and subsequent visits to the families, there is every indication that they have succeeded by the standards of their home and are the pride of their families.

In the first case, we met Bakari in Saint Louis. Bakari is on his third trip to Senegal since his departure to Spain in 2005. He is the eldest son of Maty. In a conversation with Maty (who declined any recording or note-taking), it was revealed that Bakari's first visit was during his father's funeral and he single-handedly financed it; he has just purchased a piece of land, where construction of a new family house is under way. In the meantime, he has refurbished his mother's bedroom and has bought new bedroom furniture – bed, wardrobe and dressing table, and has also bought a TV and a DVD player. After the first visit, he asked his mother to find him a bride, and when this was done, he came home for the wedding, but due to time constraints he could not spend much time with her. This meant he had to schedule another visit, and the feast of Ramadan gave him reason to come home. Although he does not send a regular stipend to her because she owns a shop in the market, she is sure to have some money whenever the need arises as it suffices for her to make a phone call for her demands to be met.

For his part, Coumba, returns with a Spanish wife to introduce to his family, yet he has a Senegalese wife who agrees to remain quiet and calm and assume the role of a sister. Through my informant and friend of Coumba, we visited his home which is '*pied dans la mer*' [close to the ocean], and well furnished. In the yard, two cars are packed, and he brought two boat engines for sale and a host of other items which my informant will help to sell. Coumba is full of energy, wearing baggy jeans, a tight-fitting T-shirt, and a very conspicuous large silver necklace and huge pendant of Africa. Both his ears pierced and he wears sunglasses indoors. He is a glare image of a returned migrant. He is not interested in an interview, but very enthusiastic in showing me the goods he has come back with, in case I am interested in buying any. He is very protective of his wife, and I guess he is wary that I might try to ask some questions. Although from the remarks he makes, Ass is not visibly happy with his friend, he agrees to advertise his goods for a commission:

*"Coumba has a lot of money, but he doesn't want to help anyone outside his family. This is the second time he has come; the last time he came with two cars, and he has built this house in two years. The house has two apartments; he rents out one and the other is for him and his family. Whenever he comes, there is a feast at his home because he spends a lot."* (Interview with Ass; Mbour: 11/11/08).<sup>9</sup>



*Repatriated Migrants  
– Ass and second wife*

From observing both migrants, listening to their families and my informant, it has been possible to establish what is considered to be a successful migrant, what success entails to a migrant and to the family (see Chapter Four). And yet this success is not shared by friends because they do not belong. Talking to repatriated migrants, the references they make and what they would like to do point to what Bakari and Coumba have achieved. Even Bakari's mother makes no secret of her view that it is thanks to him that the family was able to give her husband a befitting funeral, and she sums up by wondering what more she could possibly ask from God; God is good [*Yalla bahna*]. The items mentioned by prospective migrants also show how much value is placed on consumer goods and a well-furnished house for the most part; there is a penchant for a European-style decor and attempts to depict the architectural style they have seen in Europe. But ironically, the houses are seldom fully inhabited the way they should be, as the husbands are away most of the time and live in between Europe and Senegal and are not rooted. Despite all these different ways of displaying their fortunes, the migrants are seen to be successful. The most important measure of success is that of owning a house, for it is the ultimate aspiration of migrants. The successes of the migrants resonate with those thinking of migrating, who refer to it as a source of inspiration they want to emulate. Badara's remark captures on the aspiration of the migrants:

*"We asked about everybody and the others told us they had left; Omar and the others had emigrated. You enter a house and you ask about someone, and you are told he has travelled, and they often show a house he has started to build. You will be told he got married recently, and you will understand that things have started to change.*

Q: Does this mean those who have left encourage you?

*A: They have given us the urge, so to speak, as well as the confidence to attempt the adventure. Some people die on the way, and others reach their destination in Europe. They say in night clubs there are many white women, and they love blacks and treat them as kings. Friends can also accommodate you. Some of them have cars and work in farms. Imagine, this is encouraging and makes you want to leave. On the other hand, if Cheikh, Amadou and many others fail and die, you would be afraid. But we only receive good news from them."*<sup>10</sup>

Far from being considered as adventurers, returning migrants are seen as heroes, and there is scheming by mothers to project their daughters for marriage through the intermediary of the migrant's mother, while girls position themselves to be chosen as brides. This is in line with Riccio's findings that "mothers now want to marry their girls to rich migrants; they do not want to marry them to the brilliant students anymore" (2005: 107). This is because within the popular culture of migration, migrants are seen as "gold mines" Ferguson (1999), or as 'bush fallers' Nyamnjoh (2005 and forthcoming) whose savings are expected to help both families. When a migrant returns home in search of a bride, he takes the community by storm as every family schemes to place its daughter in the limelight. The girls themselves are far from indifferent to such manoeuvres as they are part of the scheming bevy. This is because, as mentioned earlier, every migrant is seen as a potentially successful person, irrespective of how he earns a living. The family-in-law to be are aware of the trickledown effect such a union would have on their family, hence they make every effort to ensure that it is one of their daughters, thereby confirming earlier findings by Riccio.

Due to the importance attached to marrying a migrant, most families even go to the extent of waiving certain cultural practices that may pose as an obstacle, because very often the migrants' stay is very brief and the marriage has to be contracted within a short time frame. The boat migrants, who left without wives, have been calling home asking family members, especially their mothers, to look for brides for them. Through marriage, migrants and migration have been elevated and celebrated. And those who have braved the sea are regarded as 'real men'.

### **Machismo**

Most informants, especially the younger ones, talk of how going through the journey makes you a 'real man' who is able to confront any future eventuality, as the journey in itself is tough and requires a lot of courage. Consequently, they do not disclose the details of the trajectory as they feel proud to have undertaken the journey, because part of the reason for their journey is to be able to provide for their families. This is what Gutmann calls 'macho culture', arguing that "honour and manhood have long been associated in Latin

America and Caribbean with protecting and financially providing for one's family" (1996 in Brennan 2004: 719). This reminder of Gutmann, though referring to the Mexican and Caribbean societies, can be said to be the driving force behind boat migration.

In this connection, therefore, critical to understanding the macho culture and ideologies in Senegal is the role of migration or the hope of migration by boat to the Canaries. The tendency for migrants is to celebrate the journey once successfully completed and never to give detailed accounts of what transpires at sea or the poor sanitary conditions they endured. This is because such accounts of the story are not juicy and do not show bravery. According to one of my informants, calling home once in the Canaries was intended to reaffirm their braveness and courage and to announce to friends left behind that they can be counted amongst those who have made it. Hence, all the danger is put behind them so that they can seek new comfort zones. This would explain why a migrant like Amadou was able to make the journey six times with only one successful entry into Tenerife. Amadou is 32 years old and believes that it is only by crossing the ocean to Spain that he will lead a better life and be a 'real man' like his friends. He is unable to provide for his mother, and this makes him feel very guilty because at his age, the society expects him, the eldest son, to look after the family.

Similarly, Sall has made four journeys and on all four occasions, arrived in Spain but was repatriated. Sall, 34 years old and orphaned when he was 14 years old, admitted that he would love to get married and have a family, but his present situation (jobless) does not permit him to do so because as a man you have to take care of your wife and children, provide for them and take good care of their health. In short, as he puts it, it is the duty for a man to provide a comfortable life for his wife and children; her job is to sit at home and take care of the children. He ends by resigning himself to this fate: "I am afraid; I am unable to guarantee this for any woman because I am yet to become a man, I am afraid of what any woman would think of me – a real fool!"

Amadou and Sall's cases shows how deeply enmeshed the macho culture is in the societal fabric of Senegalese culture, and how this impacts on the way the migrants see themselves and go along with

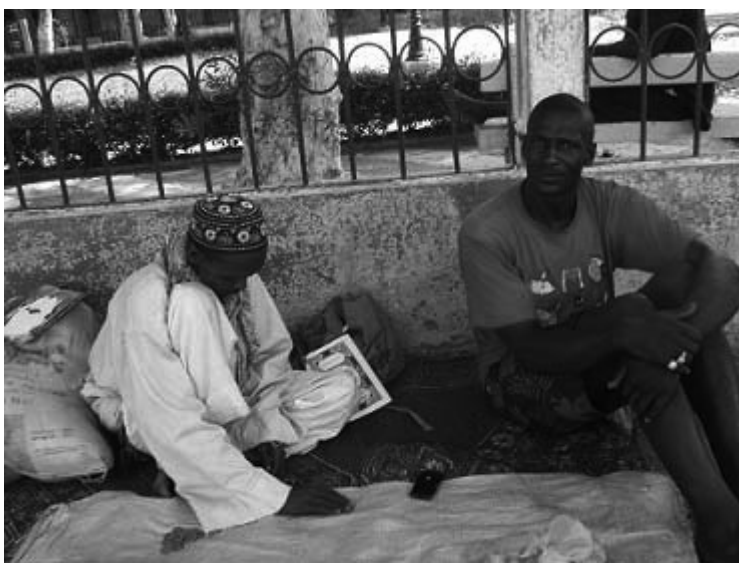
what the society demands of them. Like the men in Gutmann's study, they are men only when they can protect and provide comfortable lives for their families. Sall's scepticism is glaring.

### **Migrants' perceptions and ideologies of the spiritual/grigri powers of Marabouts**

Senegal is ninety percent Muslim, with different religious orders coexisting, the dominant being the Mouride brotherhood, or *dabira*. The followers of these orders look up to the *marabouts* for spiritual guidance and inspiration, and it is very common to find followers wearing the photos of their *marabouts* as necklaces. The *marabouts* and the Muslim brotherhood have helped to shape and influence the lives of the people through their ideologies and assistance. These two phenomena have invariably transcended the migration process and have inspired migrants to justify their religious acts with the help of *marabouts* and protective amulets they provide, guaranteeing safe arrival and eventual admission into mainland Spain on the one hand, and on the other, hope that once in Spain, they would get assistance from the nearest *dabira*.

Well-entrenched systems of bilateral relations between the religious *marabouts* and a well-organised religious society have provided an opportunity for migration to thrive. For a specified amount of money, migrants consult a *marabout* who guarantees them journey mercies, as it were, and ask for certain sacrifices to be carried out. It is thus very rare for a migrant to venture into the ocean without consulting one, and in the case where a migrant leaves abruptly, the family does so on his behalf. A lot of money is invested in seeing a *marabout* both by the migrants and the conveyors. Before a migrant sets out to travel, he solicits the divine intervention of a *marabout*, who gives him some amulets and is asked to carry out sacrifices. Some sacrifices include killing a ram and spilling its blood in the ocean at a specific time of the night, and the meat is shared to 'taalibés'<sup>11</sup> and to neighbours. Others are asked to prepare local juice such as 'bissap' (sorrel) or 'bouille' (baobab fruit or monkey bread) and distribute to neighbours and to 'taalibés'. Those who want to migrate without the knowledge of parents and family members prefer to have a mystical bath – 'bain mystique' – either at a particular location or at the *marabout's* residence. After all the

sacrifices have been performed, the *marabout* then gives the migrant some amulets aimed at warding off mishaps on different stages of the journey. Some are to ensure that the boat arrives safely with all the passengers, others protect just the individual who sought protection from the *marabout*, while others, requested by most captains, make them and the boat invisible to all other boats and especially to the FRONTEX coast guards. In return, those who seek the intervention of the *marabout*, in addition to the sacrifices they make, pay the latter between 200,000 and 700,000 CFA francs depending on the specification of the job he is expected to perform.



*A four time repatriated migrant consulting a marabout about his chances  
of migrating again without being caught*

With regard to a conveyor, it is a duty for him to see a *marabout* with all the captains and the list of the migrants. This is to verify that no ‘unclean’<sup>12</sup> migrant is in the boat, one whose presence in it would lead to problems in the course of the journey – deaths or a return of the boat without arriving Spain. The conveyor compiles a list of all the migrants who have paid the fare and takes it to the *marabout*, together with the captains, and the *marabout* prays over it all night long to verify if all are ‘clean’ to migrate in the same boat.

To the captains, he gives amulets (*gri gri*). Malick, a captain explains their visit (he and the conveyor's) to a *marabout* prior to his departure: "we went to a marabout with the list of passengers to ask if the trip would be good. He told us such and such a person should not leave, because he will spoil the trip. Once back, we gave the message to the persons concerned and refunded their money." (Interview: Yarakh, 14/01/09).<sup>13</sup> By the same token, Badara confirms Malick's account:

*"We consulted the marabout for prayers. Some pirogue owners before leaving and once your name has been written on the list, advise you to go and consult a marabout for prayers. The marabout then draws up a list of the names of all the candidates and sleeps with it. The next day, he tells the pirogue owner those who should travel and those who should not."* (Interview: Sally Portudal, 21/0708).<sup>14</sup>

On the contrary, Pape has made three unsuccessful attempts to Spain; he could only get as far as Morocco. He attributes the failure to witches who were in the boat and at night would transform into women, and at times children would be heard crying loudly in the boat, whereas at boarding time, there were no children. Pape did not consult any *marabout* prior to his departure on all journeys, and on second thought feels that the obstacles encountered are due to their failure to see one. Generally, it is extremely rare for migrants to leave without consulting a *marabout*, especially the *lebou* (fishermen) community, because according to Abdou, "seeing a marabout is part of their lives; they are fanatics".<sup>15</sup>

In an attempt to reverse such mishaps, families stay behind and continue with the consultation of *marabouts* in the absence of their sons. Such is the case with Khady, who not only emptied her savings account to pay for her two sons to migrate – one million francs – but also indebted herself to consults many *marabouts*:

*"I went to many marabouts. They asked me to offer sacrifices because they were in a dark place and only God could get them out. They asked me to offer goats, sheep, chickens and even half of a cow. It was not only for the two children, but they were accompanied. We had to offer a collective sacrifice to save everyone. That's why it was not easy."* (Interview: Thiaroye Sur Mer, 26/08/08).<sup>16</sup>



Furthermore, migration is affected by and has affected the growing appeal of reformist Islamic ideology which has arisen from the contestation of whether boat migration could be judged as suicide or as martyrdom. At the start of boat migration, some *marabouts* considered it to be suicidal and preached against going in their radio sermons. But this did not go down well with the reformists, who hold that it is not suicidal for a migrant to seek to travel by such means with the sole aim of helping the family. Rather, they believe that in the eventuality of death, such a person is sure of paradise because going out by such means was with one pressing objective – to help the family. The following excerpts by Modou capture this reasoning:

*“When clandestine emigration started, some marabouts said those who went through the sea were suicidal, but others refused, arguing that if a man goes to the sea in order to work and support his family, then it is not suicide. It is a voluntary act to help his family. And those who die on the way or there, will go directly to paradise because they were trying to support their family.”* (Interview: Saint Louis, 14/10/08).<sup>17</sup>

This dependence on religion to engage in boat migration is in contrast to the claim that the obituary of religion has been written, as suggested by Stark and Bainbridge (1996, in Hirscham, 2007: 392). This might well be the case in Europe, but empirical evidence obtained during this study shows how much religion plays a pivotal role in the daily lives of the people. This is because it is only through religion and spiritual beliefs that migrants are able to find solace to justify their actions, but far more find solace for the inevitable human experiences of death, suffering and loss. It should be recalled that these migrants are not out on a suicide mission, but in undertaking the journey, are very optimistic of success. However, they also resign themselves to whatever fate that befalls them. They derive courage from their trust in Allah as well as the *marabouts*, even quoting a text from the Koran to substantiate Allah’s protection through the intermediary of the *marabouts*. For one thing, they are certain that death can only come if it has been ordained by God, and if it is, then, “man cannot go against his destiny” *“l’homme ne peut trahir son destin”*, according to Diallo, who has made two attempts.

### **Sub-culture of migration**

However, despite these strong views and sentiments held about Europe, not everyone shares the burning desire to migrate. Those who do not see migration as an option consider it very risky and the sheer fact of leaving their families into an uncertain future is not an option. Mamadou is thirty-four years old and married with two kids. Although he is a fisherman, he nurses a lot of fright about the journey. But far more important is the fact that his mother loathes the idea of his going, and staying is also to respect her wish. He is quite conscious that the sea is unpredictable; hence anything could go wrong in the course of the journey. Those who brave it do so in search of a job, but he considers Spain to be like Senegal because he is optimistic he can make a living from fishing, and his mother does not want him to migrate as he is the eldest son and doubles as the father of the family, given that his father has passed away. The most pertinent issue to him is the fact that those who have migrated are finding it hard to settle in, as they have neither resident nor work permit and consequently are unable to work. They were driven by their wrongful perception of Europe as "a place where one can earn a lot of money."<sup>18</sup> He concludes that he is better off than those who have gone out to look for money, for not only do they have to deal with the problem of accommodation, but they also have to look for a job fast so as to start sending remittances back home (Fieldnotes, Saint Louis: 18/09/08).

Another strong rejection is voiced by Issa, twenty-eight years old and a *mareyeur* who, as he puts it, is not used to the sea, and has never considered going by boat given the idea is not logical. According to him, although the organisers and navigators rely a lot on the GPS, its usefulness is limited and not all can operate it; moreover, it is not a hundred percent reliable. Most of the deaths and drifting at sea, he thinks, are largely as a result of the fact that the GPS has been misconfigured, and it is a nightmare that it cannot endure. As much as they may be lucky with the GPS, the weather at sea can be very volatile, and the pirogues are not meant to withstand such volatility, hence it is a great risk. To him, the whole idea of going is suicidal, but unfortunately most realise this too late, only when they are in high seas, because they are not well informed

about the dangers at sea. Europe is not a haven as shown on TV, but because most migrants are convinced by the pictures they see on TV, they tend to believe that life is relatively easy in Europe.

Issa, like Mamadou, decides to listen to his mother's plea not to migrate if he is considering doing so. As argued by Ali (2007), those who choose not to go, "must defend the decisions, rationalising their abnormal stance, as those who are unwilling to go are often pitied or derided for being bad providers and are letting their families down". Contrary to Ali's argument, neither man is derided by his family, nor are their actions seen as deviant behaviour. Instead, they have chosen to listen to their mothers. This shows the dual role women play in this migration process and the position they occupy in their families as 'makers or breakers'. Those who forbade their sons to migrate, according to their sons, did so because they perceived success as not necessarily coming from Europe, but a result of hard work.

Besides, Issa is discouraged by the images shown on TV of how migrants are received by the Red Cross with gloves and masks. This image, according to him, clearly depicts the notion that illegal migrants are those that come with diseases and as such precaution must be taken in handling them, lest the Red Cross workers are infected (Fieldnotes, M'bour: 05/09/08). This notion of migrants being considered and treated as coming with diseases from Africa is expounded by Bankoff et al, (2004). So indeed the same images that make others leave are repulsive to others.

Sy's case stands out. Sy had the opportunity to migrate for free on both occasions when Modou was sending a boat to Spain, but turned it down. According to him, "a journey should be prepared to ensure acceptable conditions, and should be legal. There should be no problem in finding accommodation. Without all these, I could not go. Contacts should be made beforehand."<sup>19</sup> Asked why he turned down going with his friends, he said:

*"We didn't have the same point of view. Everyone accepts what is enough for him; for me, I wasn't satisfied. If I had someone with whom I could stay and who could take care of me, I wouldn't hesitate. Travelling requires some reflection. But I didn't reflect at that time."*<sup>20</sup>

Sy's case, though strange for a man of his age when his peers were clamouring to migrate, shows just how strong the sub-culture of non-migration is despite the hugely influential culture of migration. What is more these pockets of people are not looked down on as much as those who attempted the journey and failed, nor do they consider themselves as failures. They are probably the 'real' machos.

## **Conclusion**

Migration, as mentioned earlier, is a learned social behaviour and the would-be migrants learn to migrate from seeing how migrant members of their families and friends are treated with great respect and are the centre of attention when they return to Senegal on holiday. The perceived glamour that drives mothers to marry their daughters to migrants only helps to infuse migration with grandeur and excitement in the eyes of those yet to migrate.

The attitude of successful migrants and the impression of Europe that they give further help to encourage prospective migrants and their families, causing rivalry in families. This rivalry is quite visible among wives, who tend to compare unfavourably their sons who did not succeed to those of their co-wives who have succeeded. This family rivalry is also a motivating factor to those left behind, as we have seen.

As much as most people like to migrate, there are still those who strongly feel that going to Spain does not necessarily mean that success is imminent. One of my informants also thinks that with more seriousness and hard work, the fishers could succeed. He goes on to say that:

*"If they are more serious and hardworking, they can succeed and have money. You don't pick up money like leaves. You have to work very hard for it. Even in Spain, there are some people who don't have anything. Those who work hard succeed, but those who don't work have nothing. And that's how it is everywhere."*<sup>21</sup>

## Notes

1. To be considered a good fisherman, one is expected to have followed the migratory flows of fish, and have participated in the different sojourns of fishing – from fifteen days to four months of continuous fishing at sea.
2. « C'est une grande victoire d'être un immigré qui parle Italien, Espagnol. C'est une symbole de réussite, d'ascension sociale. Tu te fais beaucoup d'argent, tu te marries à une Toubab. Tu construis la maison familiale. Quand tu reviens tout le monde vient te rendre visite, comment il est, c'est un grand bonheur et honneur. C'est comme si tu es devenait populaire tout d'un coup. Même si tu achètes des vêtements à 3000f au marché Sandaga de Dakar, les gens penseront tu les a emmené de l'étranger, d'Espagne. Badara est un Italien. Il dépasse largement le succès de l'enseignant et de tout le monde. Tu es privilégié et les gens se leurrent de cette façon. C'est le Bon Dieu qui l'a voulu ainsi. Les gens adorent voyager, c'est pour ainsi dire ancrée dans la culture. »
3. He was one of the early arrivals in Tenerife who got a job, but was convinced by the Spanish conveyors to convey migrants from Morocco to The Canaries for a fee.
4. « Quand je regarde la télé et je vois l'Europe c'est comme si j'entre dans la télé, depuis mon enfance je rêve d'aller en Europe, Europe est belle, il y a la richesse et des possibilités. »
5. « L'Europe est un El Dorado, l'ailleurs est toujours mieux que chez soi, ils sont prêts à braver tous les dangers pour que leur rêves se réalise. Seulement, au bout de ce voyage de la mort, ils rencontrent la vraie réalité: personne ne veut d'eux sur sa terre. »
6. « Dans tous les cas la vie en Europe est meilleure que celle d'ici..., En Europe c'est mieux qu'en Afrique parce que là-bas tu peux gagner, tu peux épargner de l'argent. Vraiment là-bas il ya la belle vie, il n'y a pas de problème. Tu manges bien, tu dors bien. Tu n'as pas de soucis du tout. Tu peux même te payer une voiture, sans déboursier beaucoup d'argent. Ici, une voiture coûte entre six et sept millions. »
7. « L'Europe c'est un demi-paradis, les gens qui vit en Europe quand ils meurent à la resurrection, ils vont au paradis et ils se retrouvent chez eux parce qu'ils ont habitués. Mais nous en Afrique quand on part au paradis ça nous éveille. »
8. Fieldnotes, M'bour: 03/09/08 & 11/11/08 respectively.

9. « Coumba, il a beaucoup de l'argent mais il ne veut pas aider quelqu'un en dehors de sa famille. C'est la deuxième fois de venir, la dernière avec deux voitures, et il a construit cette maison dans deux ans, c'est deux appartements et il loue un, et l'autre c'est pour lui et sa famille. Toujours quand il arrive c'est la fête chez lui car il dépense trop. »
10. « On demandait après chacun et les autres nous répondaient qu'ils sont partis, Omar, et les autres ont émigré. Tu entres dans une maison, tu demandes après quelqu'un, on te dit qu'il a voyagé et souvent on te montre ce qu'il a commencé à construire. Il s'est marié tout dernièrement on te dira et tu comprendras que les choses ont commencé à changer.  
Q. Cela veut-il dire que les gens qui sont partis t'incitent?  
R. Ils nous ont donné l'appétit pour ainsi dire, ensemble avec la confiance de tenter l'aventure. Certains meurent en cours de route d'autres arrivent à leur destination en Europe. Ils disent que dans les boîtes de nuit, il y a beaucoup de Toubabs, et qu'elles aiment beaucoup les noirs et qu'on les traitait comme des rois. Les amis peuvent toujours t'héberger. On nous dit que certains ont des voitures et ils travaillent dans les champs. Vous vous imaginez, c'est motivant cela et tu as tant envie de partir. Au contraire, si Cheikh, Amadou et beaucoup d'autres échouent et meurent, tu auras peur. Mais ce sont de bonnes nouvelles qui nous viennent d'eux. »
11. Pupils of the marabout, to whom he teaches the Koran. The pupils survive by street begging.
12. These are migrants suspected of having ill-luck or of being possessed by evil spirits, whom the evil spirits use to cause harm to other migrants at night.
- 13 « On est parti chez le marabout avec la liste de passagers pour demander si le voyage serait bon. Il nous a dit que telle personne et telle ne peut pas partir, c'est eux qui vont gâter le voyage. De retour, on a transmis le message aux dites personnes et leur a remboursé. »
14. « On a consulté le marabout pour les prières, Certains piroguiers avant de partir, une fois tu t'inscris ils te conseillent d'aller consulter un marabout pour les prières. Le marabout alors dresse une liste des noms de tous les candidats et dort avec. Le lendemain il communiquera au piroguier les résultats et lui dira celui qui doit partir et celui qui ne doit pas partir. »
15. « Maraboutage ! Ça fait partie de leur vie, ils sont fanatiques. »

16. « Je suis parti chez beaucoup de marabouts. Ils m'ont demandés de faire des offrandes parce qu'ils étaient dans un endroit obscur dont seul Dieu pourrait les sortir. Il m'a demandé pour faire le sacrifice avec des chèvres, moutons, poulets et même une moitié de vache. Ce n'était pas pour les deux enfants seulement mais ils étaient accompagnés. On devait faire un sacrifice collectif pour sauver tout le monde. C'est la raison pour laquelle ça n'a pas été facile. »
17. « Quand l'émigration clandestine a commencé il y a quelque marabouts qui ont dit que ceux qui passent à la mer c'est pour leur suicider, mais il y a des autres qui ont dit non, si un homme part à la mer pour faire travailler pour soutenir la famille, c'est ne pas la suicide. C'est volontaire pour aider la famille. ET ceux qui sont morts en cours de route où là-bas, partent au paradis parce que si tu es quitté ici pour travailler pour la famille et décédé là-bas, tu pars directement au paradis parce que tu es parti pour soutenir la famille. »
18. « un lieu là où on ramasse l'argent. »
19. « Un voyage doit se préparer dans des conditions supportables, dans une voie légale. Trouver un hébergement sans avoir des problèmes. Sans avoir tout ceci, je n'ai pas voulu aller. Il faudrait au préalable avoir des contacts. »
20. « Nous n'avions pas la même vision, le même point de vue. Chacune avec ce qui lui suffit. Moi ça ne me suffit pas du tout. Si j'avais quelqu'un chez qui rester qui pouvait prendre soin de moi. Je n'hésiterais pas. Ce n'est pas sur ce plan. Voyager implique le fait d'y songer. Mais moi je n'y pensais pas en ce moment. »
21. « S'ils y mettent beaucoup de sérieux et de rigueur, ils peuvent réussir et avoir de l'argent. L'argent ne se ramasse pas comme des feuilles. On doit travailler dur pour le gagner. Même en Espagne, il y a certains qui n'ont rien. Ceux qui travaillent s'en sortent, mais ceux qui ne travaillent pas n'ont rien. Et c'est partout comme cela. »





### Navigating and harnessing networks in the migration process

#### Introduction

Networks occupy a privileged position within clandestine migration as structures facilitating the migration process, on the one hand, and on the other hand, as a recourse for the reception and integration of migrants. As Tilly succinctly puts it; ‘Individuals do not migrate, networks do’ (cited in Wabgou, 2008: 142). It is only within the context of a network of social relationships that individual calculations become useful predictors of the direction and flow of migration (Wabgou, 2008). Network sharing forms an important aspect of the Senegalese culture often referred to as ‘*teranga*’ (hospitality). It is thus in this spirit that migration networks function, making migration a social process and not an individual one. The roles of kinship ties and friendship (Massey *et al.*, 1987) have undoubtedly been the common tapped network resources, what Wilson (1994) has recently labelled “network-mediated migration” (cited in Brettell, 2000: 107). Wilson goes on to argue (1994: 275) that migration networks must be conceived as facilitating rather than encapsulating, as permeable, expanding, and fluid rather than as correlating with a metaphor of a rigid and bounded structure. Similarly, Massey *et al.* (1993: 449) suggest that networks can become self-perpetuating to migration because: “each act of migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it. Every new migrant reduces the cost of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are therefore induced to migrate, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad.”

The theory of ‘network-mediated migration’, therefore, is quite distinct from theories rooted in the rational-choice and decision-making models often used by economists and political scientists. These models, in fact, tend to focus on the individuals’ ability to migrate and neglect the social dynamics involved in the migration process. This chapter thus focuses on the migrant household as a

whole, how decision-making is no longer an individual affair in migrating, but rather involves the entire family. By focusing on this approach, we should be able to understand not only how the would-be migrant negotiates networks, but also how the household harnesses these networks to good effect to enable the would-be migrant to travel. As argued by Brettell (2000: 107), "households and social networks mediate the relationship between the individual and the world system and provide a more proactive understanding of the migrant than that provided by the historical-structuralist framework." This, for example, does not limit our focus only to the social aspects of network, but also reintroduces other variables of cultural aspects.

The unit of analysis in this chapter is, therefore, to find out to what extent networks contributed to boat migration? How much influence does the family in particular exert? There are different levels of network that are subsumed in the migration process. Taken together, they all function as shock absorbers to ease the burden as well as facilitate the process. This chapter will detail the role of the various actors that, put together, form the migrants' network.

**The role of the family (parents):** Migration is not often an individual decision, but rather a collective one by the family who see a need to safeguard their livelihood as well as to improve it. Migration becomes an investment by the family (Fall, 1998; Ba, 2007; Haas, 2007). The family, in most cases, plays a dual role. While some strongly oppose their sons' migration, others do whatever it takes to ensure their departure, citing others who have successfully migrated and have become the pride of their families. In this connection, households' savings are often mobilised for the fares, while some take loans with the hope that upon arrival, the migrants will secure a job and help in repaying the loans, while assets such as land and houses are sold to finance the journey. Some are fortunate to succeed, but others are not, as they are repatriated. A case in point is that of Moustapha and his brother, whose trip to Spain was sponsored by their parents. Their parents emptied all their savings of one million CFA francs to pay for the journey but unfortunately they only went as far as Morocco due to strong winds and a boat wreck. Khady tells her story:

*“They confessed that they were ashamed. They didn’t want me to continue taking care of them. They were looking for a way to ease the situation. I had confidence in them, but I was afraid. I withdrew money and gave them. One million for the two of them. They went to Saint Louis.”* (Thiaroye-sur-Mer; 26/08/08).<sup>1</sup>

Such investments by the parents show that migration, to a large extent, is a deliberate choice and an investment by reasonably prosperous households and families. The case of Khady proves the point that migrants are not the most desperate or poor people. For the family to have raised a million francs on the spur of the moment effectively shows how migration is a well-calculated attempt by the family to strategise on improving its livelihood. It also shows that the choice to migrate does not rest solely with the migrant but with the whole family as they are the ones to provide the funds for the migrant to leave. Although Khady’s sons expressed the wish to migrate, the final decision remained that of the family.

Also amongst parents, we witnessed situations where there is a division among parents on the decision to migrate. In most instances, informants tell of how the fathers are against the son migrating, while the mothers are in favour and as such work in collaboration with their sons. Mbacke comes from a fairly wealthy background; his father, a seasoned and respected fisherman in the community, owns six boats, twelve engines, and five nets. He is totally against Mbacke’s departure to Spain because he wants his son to take over from him and keep alive the family legacy of fishing. Having failed to convince Mbacke to give up ambitions of migrating, he resorts to threats:

*“On several occasions, at least four, I talked to him about it. If he wants to leave and I refuse, he will not succeed. If I refuse and even if you consult the greatest marabout, Serigne Bara Mbacké, and he recites all the Korans in the world, you will not succeed.”* (Saint Louis, 20/10/08).<sup>2</sup>

Oumar, an elderly man in his 70s like Mbacke’s father, refuses to permit his sons to migrate, but is later full of regret for he thinks his house he started in 1990 would have been completed if he had allowed his two sons to go to Spain when they were clamouring to go; his situation would have improved because they are very loyal and hardworking, and he can see how much his friends’ sons are doing for their families.

By contrast, Demba still thinks going to Europe by boat is illegal, and it being also illegal to enter Spain without a visa, he would not endorse any of his sons going to Europe:

*"I tell you, clandestine emigration involves leaving the Senegalese territory to go to Spain. In the high seas, there are many waves and problems, and our pirogues cannot resist them. That is why I have told my children not to go to Spain. One cannot live on fishing, but God can feed us."*(Interview, Saint Louis: 22/10/08).<sup>3</sup>

Despite this refusal by fathers, some sons manage to find favour with their mothers. It should be noted that in the Senegalese community, the male child is particularly attached to the mother; hence they are able to convince her to accept to support the decision for them to travel, and Mohammed did exactly so:

*"It was the first time I heard about it, but then I am my mother's friend; I returned to Pekine to talk with her...my mother said since I had taken the decision, I could leave".* (Dakar: 14/07/08).<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Mbacke's mother shares her son's interest in migrating, despite his father having rejected his decision to migrate. She thus sends him to see her *marabout* and assures him she will tell his father and reconcile them. Some parents who did not allow their sons to go to Europe later regretted their decision when they saw how children of friends were succeeding and were able to construct houses for their parents, significantly improving their parents' standards of living.

It should be recalled that many mothers are the architects of their sons' departure to Spain, for they either sell their gold jewellery or whatever they inherited<sup>5</sup> from their parents to sponsor the trip. Mothers are seen to perhaps be in complicity with their sons' intention to leave. This is as a result of the strong ties they share with their sons on the one hand, and on the other hand, their certainty with regard to their desires, having seen the difference among their peers whose sons are in Europe. But far more important is the anchorage of this relationship which is referred to in the Koran and is expressed by Saidou as follows:

*“In the Muslim religion, the Prophet says a mother is the closest person to her child. Even during prayers, if your mother calls for you once you should answer, and if it is your father, you should wait for the third time to answer. This shows how important a mother is to her child.”*(Yarakh: 14/01/09).<sup>6</sup>

Such respect for and celebration of motherhood also explain why mothers are at the forefront of the departure of their sons. Even much more is the fact that they are encouraged by the investments carried out by a neighbour's son from Spain. Mothers therefore do all within their power to facilitate the departure of their sons. It is very important to analyse the context of this trend within the socio-cultural set-up of the society in order to understand clearly its rationale.

Most families in Senegal are polygamous and the responsibility of each household depends on the mother for the daily expenses, but because most of them are unable to meet these daily expenses, they are forced to rely on their eldest sons for financial assistance. The sons also see it as their responsibility to assist their mothers and their siblings. Besides, the strong rivalry amongst co-wives has fuelled the migration process. Because of the need to succeed, a mother encourages her son to migrate in order to ensure the economic and social success of her branch of the family. A similar finding is echoed by Bouilly (2008: 20), who captures it very well in this remark by a mother:

*“Our husbands are polygamous and we the wives, we are in a fierce competition. Thus the first woman who succeeds in making her son leave is considered the best wife.”*<sup>7</sup>

Mbacke's case illustrates this phenomenon; as a second wife, whose co-wife has a son and a son-in law in Spain, Mbacke's mother would not yield to the objection of her husband to Mbacke's emigration. Not even the mention of Mbacke as a potential heir to his amassed fishing wealth stops her from pursuing her dream of having a son in Europe. It is mind-boggling to notice how the insatiable quest to succeed socially and economically has pushed mothers and made them completely blind to the dangers that they are sending their sons into. The case of Therno<sup>8</sup> shows just how far mothers would go to make sure their sons go to Spain. Therno spent

three years in Italy before his arrest and subsequent repatriation. He had to go to Europe because he is the eldest son in the family, and was encouraged by his mother. While he was there, the family was entitled to a monthly income and the amount would vary depending on how much he earned each month. When he was repatriated, the family was very unhappy and his mother approached all the *marabouts* she could afford to find out why such ill luck should befall the family, whilst also nurturing the belief that it was as a result of her co-wife's jealousy.

By contrast, while some parents are instrumental to sending their sons to Spain, others are adamantly against their going. They consider the journey to be perilous and insecure, and would rather they remained and continued with fishing though the income from it is nothing to write home about. Some parents even threaten their sons with a curse and refuse to give them their blessings. In the Senegalese culture, this is a serious rupture between son and parents and instils in the former a sense of premonition, thus holding him back from migrating.

Although some women cooperate with their sons to ensure that they migrate, others are actively engaged in fighting against this sort of journey. This is the case with The Association of Women against Clandestine Migration of Thiaroye-sur-mer (*Le collectif des femmes pour la lutte contre l'immigration clandestine de Thiaroye-sur-mer*). This fight only came about as a result of them bearing witness to friends who have lost their son(s) in this journey, hence the commonality shared by the women and *raison d'être* of the group. Remember Moussa – the educated fisherman in Saint Louis? He is very sure that his numerous failures to reach or enter Spain when he finally arrives are due to his mother's steadfastness against his going: "*it's the lack of commitment by my parents who did not want me to stay in Spain*", and that he will not succeed because she was not interested in his going to Europe as she tells him that "*go there, and even if you become a multi-millionaire, I won't want any of your money.*" (Saint Louis: 22/09/08).<sup>10</sup>

**Family at large** – uncles, aunts, and cousins: Senegalese migration is often as much a family strategy as an individual decision, and it is not unusual for the whole family to contribute to one person's departure because it is often considered as an investment. If the migrant succeeds, then the whole family stands to benefit from his success. Finances from this group come in various forms, such as

acting as guarantor or either offering property as collateral so that the conveyor can transport the migrant to Spain, while the family seeks the rest of the money afterwards. This upholds the African adage that ‘a child belongs to one person only in the womb’. In some cases, a family meeting is convened for members to make contributions and pledges to sponsor one of theirs. The donations are made in the hope that if the child succeeds in entering Spain, the entire family will benefit from his stay. Apart from financial obligations, family members are called upon to shower the migrant with their prayers in order to pave the way for him. It is believed there are special verses and texts in the Koran, which, when recited by fervent faithfuls, will protect migrants and enhance success.

Besides financial and spiritual support, the support of the family member abroad is needed to facilitate the release of the migrant upon arrival in Spain. According to the accounts of migrants who arrived in the islands, they spend a maximum of forty days in the detention camps, after which they are either sent on to mainland Spain or repatriated. The key factor influencing a migrant’s release is proof of a resident relative or friend who is willing to provide accommodation for them. The following accounts of two migrants will elucidate how the process works. Moussa has made three attempts to Spain; on two occasions he arrived in Tenerife. The first was futile as he only went as far as Morocco; their boat split and he was rescued by Moroccan coast guards. The second time, he was asked if he has any relative whom he could call to fetch him from the camp.

*“The Red Cross asked me if I had anyone who could come and get me. I said yes thinking my cousin would come. But when I called him, he said he could not at that time because he had a problem with his white wife. With no one to receive me, I had to be repatriated after twenty-seven days in detention. I wasn’t lucky; perhaps God had heard my mother’s anguish.”* (Interview: Saint Louis: 22/09/08).<sup>11</sup>

As regards the last attempt, he was repatriated after thirty-eight days, two days short of release. Under Spanish law as made known to migrants upon arrival, they can be detained for a maximum period of forty days, after which they are either set free or repatriated.

By contrast, Therno was lucky for after seventeen days in detention. He and eighteen passengers in his boat were taken to Barcelona, where he was asked to call a relative to come for him. He called an uncle in Italy who spoke with the Spanish guard and the latter agreed to put him in a bus bound for Italy.

**Friends:** This group of networks can be subdivided into three categories; friends yet to migrate seeking information, those who have attempted but failed, and those who have succeeded. Together they all form an important group of networks. Undoubtedly, peer pressure does not influence only teenagers; the influence is across the age spectrum. If the proverb that 'birds of a feather flock together' is anything to go by, then obviously would-be migrants are often together to draw from each other's source of information. Again, as Moussa indicates, "*we needed information because at that time all the students of my batch (1980-1985) were in the streets and information circulated everywhere*".<sup>12</sup> Prior to his departure, Moussa would spend a lot of time with his peers reviewing all the information each person had gathered to determine the options and the way forward. This age cohort looks for any possible means to migrate. Using the information they obtain as a jumping-off point, they try to convince boat owners to make available their boats to transport migrants. In the last attempt, a host of them moved to Nouahdibou, Mauritania to migrate, given that the political economy of migration had moved there due to police harassment in Senegal.

Although migrants who attempted but failed to reach Spain or arrived but were repatriated have very low rating among friends, they are still able to attract attention as they are requested to give account of their journey, and thereby inspire those aspiring to migrate. But usually, they only offer censored information, withholding especially sections in which difficulties were met, and how they were rescued or how they were intercepted by coast guards. Withholding information makes the migration phenomenon looks like a cult group to which one has to belong before intimate information is shared. In the same vein, the migrant tends to have cult followers with an insatiable desire for more information to assuage their curiosity. On the other hand, unsuccessful migrants say it is something one has to experience in order to get a feel of it, for no amount of explanation would give it an appropriate description.



**Successful migrants:** The last group are those who successfully arrived and are released into mainland Spain. They are, by and large, the propellers of migration-successful migrants. All information they send to peers left behind is treated as vital for subsequent use. There is information about whose boat to use because not all conveyors are out to ensure the safety of their passengers: some are simply out for the money, and are therefore not keen to spend much of their money on the journey. When Modou's first boat arrived safely within five days, the information spread like wildfire, especially from those who travelled by his boat. They called home and advised friends to look out for his next boat, for he invested a lot of money in the journey. "*Modou's pirogue arrive safe and sound; we will all go with him,*"<sup>13</sup> said one of the migrants who used his boat but was repatriated. Not only did the migrants inform friends left behind, they also informed their host about Modou and gave them his contacts. They migrants in turn called to send money via Western Union for him to transport relatives. In the same vein, this is how Tall got passengers for his second trip, more especially as all one hundred and nine passengers of his first boat were admitted into mainland Spain. Also, information is given on whom to look out for as captain of the boat because not all captains know the way or can brave the situation. With regard to the latter, this is what Badara says:

*"They always advise people not to take pirogues from Kayaar, Hann; they should leave from Guet Ndar, Saint Louis. They are the ones who know the way. It was from here that passengers were taken. They are great fishermen who know the way and the sea. They scarcely miss their way. They can be at sea for one year without coming to land. They are the ones who discovered the way."* (Interview, Sally Portudal: 21/07/08).<sup>14</sup>

Those still to migrate are coached on what to say once they are picked up by the Red Cross, as well as in court, and advised to have phone numbers of their contacts to hand in case they are lucky to be released; the number will come in handy to call the person to come and fetch them. It should be noted that no meaningful information is given about the journey; if any, it is the duration. Migrants usually leave groping their way, uncertain about each mile. Probably if information about the exigencies is widely disseminated, migrants might have second thoughts before opting to migrate.

**Wives:** Wives, like the parents, are in two categories; some are in support of their spouses' clandestine migration, while others are totally against the move. According to some of the wives I spoke to, they think that it is necessary for their spouses to travel in order to help the family financially. They complain of how the fishing sector is no longer profitable and how they are unable to send their children to school due to lack of money. Rhama is one of the women who accept that their husbands should migrate to Spain; she puts it thus:

*"I was informed of his departure and I accepted it because there is no work here. As a fisherman, he could not meet the needs of the family. However, since he left, there has been a change in our lives. He manages to send us money even though he rents documents to work for three to four months. It is much better than before."* (Yarakh: 14/01/09).<sup>15</sup>

Rhama is twenty-eight years old and has three children between the ages of three and eleven. The three-year old was four months old when the father migrated to Spain. Binta, like Coumba, also endorsed the idea of her spouse going to Spain. She seems to be more interested in the remittances he sends home than his coming to visit because it would mean that he cannot go back due to lack of a residence permit. And she is prepared to wait for him no matter how long it takes for him to secure one, but much more as long as he keeps sending home some money.

Sophia very much wants her husband to migrate because he is a seasoned fisherman and has a fishing licence. She hopes that with his licence he will be able to secure a job. But what makes her outstanding is that she has unequivocally rejected a boat journey and is prepared to assist him financially to buy a Spanish visa with the earnings from her sale of fish. She supports his going with a legal visa, but ironically the process of securing the visa is not legal. Unfortunately, this has not worked as planned, for on two occasions her husband has been duped by middlemen who claim to have connections with the Spanish embassy, and huge sums of money have been taken for no service in return. This has not watered down her spirits, for she is still determined for him to go even if it means borrowing money to pay for the visa. What matters to her is for him to leave with a visa.

With a few exceptions, the general trend among the women I contacted was to support their spouses to migrate. They argued that fishing was no longer profitable and that there was an acute lack of fish. Their immediate worry was finding an alternative livelihood, and they seemed to ignore or downplay the dangers of the sea journey by pinning all their hopes on *marabouts*, prayers and God, and allowing destiny to take its course. But Youssuf thinks that it is because of their quest for material wealth that the women allow their spouses to migrate. He says: “How can one explain that you can let the person you married out of love go and commit suicide like that? The women think only of the money that they would send; this is unacceptable.”<sup>16</sup> All the women I talked to in Kayar and Yarakh did not see anything wrong with their husbands going, as long as they called home regularly and sent monthly stipends.

The conveyors and the middlemen are the prime movers of clandestine migration. Tall is one of the leading conveyors in Saint Louis, but had to give it up because of the police clampdown on conveyors. He tells of how before the controls, all his journeys were organised during the day because the phenomenon was openly discussed. Although he acknowledged the profit made from transporting the migrants, he also pointed out the enormous challenges involved:

*“It is very difficult to sleep because your mobile phone rings all the time, and because the phenomenon was not controlled. There was much scheming by the policemen who asked for money and for their family members to be taken free of cost. However, the most difficult was the day they started the journey. During such time I could not sleep; I was anxious to know whether there was any problem on the journey. I can sleep only after they arrive.”* (Saint Louis: 12/09/08).<sup>17</sup>

As earlier mentioned, Tall’s main reason for organising these journeys is not for the huge profit involved, but to help the unemployed youths to go out and look for jobs.

For his part, Sall played a triple role of conveyor, middleman and captain. His intention was to migrate as well, given that he has been a captain twice but was repatriated on both occasions. Familiar with how to organise the trip, he moved from Saint Louis to Kayar to organise one. This is what he says:

A: When I came back, I remained for two months. I constructed my own pirogue.

*Q: So the second journey was with your own pirogue?*

A: Yes, My own pirogue, and I hired some 50 people.

*Q: How much did each person pay?*

A: Each person paid 300,000 francs.

*Q: How much did you get in all?*

A: I got 9,000,000 francs.

*Q: How did you spend the money?*

A: I bought an engine.

*Q: For how much?*

A: 2,500,000 francs.

*Q: And the rest?*

A: I bought fuel for 1,600,000 francs.

*Q: So you used all the money for the journey?*

A: I could not collect people's money and not go with them.

*Q: So you went on the journey, did you reach your destination?*

A: I arrived on 15 August 2006, not 13 August 2006.

*Q: In Tenerife?*

A: No, in Las Palmas.

*Q: And why did you come back?*

A: The President sent back people in planes. After that I came back.<sup>18</sup>

Sall, like Tall is not so keen on the money, but his main aim is to migrate and help those who want to migrate. Having lived in Spain for four months and been repatriated, he vowed not to give up on migration because he is clearly aware of the difference between Senegal and the Canaries.

Djiby is a very successful conveyor; none of the one hundred and sixty-three migrants he sent, has been repatriated. He sent two boats of eighty-four and seventy-nine migrants respectively in 2006 from Tingue in Refusque. Djiby, being a successful fisherman, had no intention to migrate, but was convinced by friends who have successfully migrated to Spain, those willing to migrate and captains ready to navigate the boat. He was particularly convinced by information from successful migrants, who gave him hints on how to organise a safe and successful journey. Flanked by willing migrants and captains urging him to prepare a boat, he gave in to their desires. Djiby's account reflects that of other conveyors, who are lured into the business by anxious youths desperate to migrate.

Middlemen complement the services of the conveyors. Given that most of these middlemen are also prospective migrants, they have antenna all over and are able to reach out to peers who would like to migrate and to convince those who display any signs of fear. The middlemen know exactly whom to target – people such as petty traders and farmers in Touba, Louga and Dourbel because these groups of persons can afford to pay the amount required. Also, they are aware that migration is rife and has become part and parcel of the way of life in the above mentioned areas, hence they take their campaigns there, knowing that they will get as many recruits as possible. For instance, Sane and two other friends organised a boat from Nouakchott. They spread out to various towns. One stayed in Nouakchott, the other went to Touba, and Sane went to Saint Louis. In Saint Louis, he sent his brother to the market to talk to petty traders, while he went to the neighbouring villages to get passengers. Sane was both a conveyor and a middleman. He did not want to employ the services of a middleman because of the cost – he has to transport every passenger to Nouakchott and lodge them at his expense when they have paid the required fare; he did not have much left to recruit a middleman. Though he was a conveyor, he was also an active recruiter.

Badara worked together with the conveyor as middleman, and his role was undisputed because the conveyor could not do without him: “the owner cannot organize a journey without me. I am the brain, but he has the resources”<sup>19</sup>. Before his dreams of going to Spain, Badara, thirty-two years of age, worked for CFAO (motor centre and garage) and was happily married with two daughters. But after his three failed attempts to reach Spain, his wife divorced him. Despite this, he has not given up on migrating as he strongly believes that having attempted the journey three times and seen friends perish in front of him is a sign that God has a bright future for him, and this has motivated him and increased his faith in God. He says: “I’ll get my cake and my tea one day, God willing”<sup>20</sup>. He explains how he goes about his job:

*“We get people, but we do so gently and not by force. We ask you if you want to go to Spain and if you knew of any pirogues about to leave. If you are a warrior, you take a decision. If you want to go, we ask you to pay 400,000*

*francs. You can beat the price down to 350,000 francs and we agree on a price. We encourage you and boost your morale, and this gives you confidence. You can keep the money until the day of departure, and you can come with friends. Before the day of departure, you must confirm in advance by giving us your phone number. We only tell you the specific place and time of departure at the last moment."*<sup>21</sup>

Apart from actively recruiting migrants, the middlemen also act as sentinels, protecting their job as well as the conveyor's. Again Badara says:

*"We don't contact just anybody. There are people, policemen who want to infiltrate the network. Hence one can never know the intentions and motivations of customers. Many pirogue owners have been arrested before their departure. People who want to travel come and we give them the contacts. It's like selling drugs; you can never trust people. You give information and we always verify to ensure it is correct, without taking any risks."*<sup>22</sup>

For both journeys Badara organised with his present conveyor, he was rewarded with a free seat and some money. By the time I met him, he was back at work, actively recruiting some more migrants for a third trip planned to take off from Zinguinchor in the South of Senegal, where a boat has already been stationed.<sup>23</sup>

The role of neighbours in the migration process cannot be underestimated. Their participation comes usually during the preparation phase of the journey. When a conveyor is preparing a journey, in order to take all the necessary precautions to safeguard the materials and provisions needed for the journey, all what is acquired is kept in a neighbour's house. This is so that in case the conveyor is caught and his house is searched, the materials will be safe. For example, on the eve of his departure, Malick was arrested and eventually imprisoned for six months, but because he had finalised the preparation of the journey, his second captain was able to leave with the passengers, as the materials and groceries that were stored in a neighbour's house were not confiscated.

The neighbours also act as lookouts, protecting the conveyor from arrest and from suspicious persons. In the following account by Mohammed, he tells of how neighbours are unwilling to let him

have access to the conveyor because they are not sure if he is a spy or genuine migrant seeking information: “my friend took me right to that house over there. I asked, but the neighbours refused to speak because they didn’t want to divulge their secret”.<sup>24</sup> (Interview: Dakar, 14/07/08). Moustapha moved from Thiaroye sur Mer to Saint Louis, where he had to wait for the boat for a week before leaving. In the meantime, he and other friends were lodged by different neighbours; this is what he says:

*“We were in Saint Louis for nearly one week, waiting for his list to be completed. We were in his mother-in-law’s house. People were contacted, and they came one by one. 82 people were brought together, and lodged and fed in houses owned by his acquaintances.”*<sup>25</sup> (Interview: Thiaroye Sur Mer, 26/08/08).

Furthermore, neighbours help conveyors in lodging the migrants a few days prior to departure. When all is set for the boat to leave, the migrants in the villages are called to gather at a particular place where they will be lodged by the conveyor in a neighbour’s house. The neighbours do not render their services for free; they are usually rewarded with money and/or are entitled to about three free seats in the boat.

The above analysis points to the intricacies of boat migration. In order to get a full glimpse of how negotiations are made at different levels, these overarching networks cannot be studied individually.

### **Muslim Brotherhood or the dahira Confraternity**

The *dahira*, according to Babou (2000: 154), is a ‘creation of urban *Murids* that fulfils religious as well as secular functions. Also, it serves as an instrument for the socialization and integration of the *Murid* urban communities at home and abroad’. This group, Babou goes on, has been able to thrive ‘because it constitutes an important source of social capital’.

The *dahira* draws its inspiration from the life of its leader Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, and always associates its own migration experiences and the problems encountered abroad to those of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba following his exile by the French. Knowing only too well the difficulties and challenges that newly-arrived

migrants face, especially those arriving by boat, the *dahira* put in place the necessary logistics to help its people settle in by providing temporary accommodation, and also use their contacts to try to secure jobs for them. From its inception, its role has not changed; it is to give new immigrants the opportunity to meet their more experienced peers and learn from their experience of city life. The *dahira* also assists in the organization of religious and social events. In light of this, Hirschman (2007: 392) contends that 'the combination of culturally attuned spiritual comfort and material assistance heightens the attraction of membership and participation for new immigrants'. This active role by the *dahira* can also be explained by the fact that religious organizations have increasingly tended to play a dominant socio-economic role in the society, a role that was previously limited to the government and which it no longer fully plays. By and large, the *dahira* can be seen as social capital as postulated by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 119). They opine that "social capital is the sum of the resources actual or virtual that accrues to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (in Massey *et al.*, 1998: 42). This form of social capital is bottom-up and not top-down. It represents a resource that can be drawn on by both the rich and the poor for mutual benefit.

While some migrants go to Europe because they are sponsored by relations in Europe who are also willing to provide accommodation, some of them go without any prior knowledge of how they would survive and without having anyone to host them. With the latter, once they have been released from detention camps, they seek to move to the towns (Barcelona & Madrid) where this Muslim Brotherhood or *dahira* has set up homes to receive migrants temporarily while they search for alternative accommodation. For instance, after the release of Thiane from the Red Cross detention centre, he chose to go to Barcelona precisely for this reason. While there, he was given accommodation for a period of three months, but due to ill health, his period of stay was extended indefinitely and his medical bills taken care of. In view of his continued ill-health, he asked to be sent back home. The *dahira* also helped with all the administrative formalities to ensure that the Spanish Government repatriated him. According to Thiane, the house was



always full and all the migrants were provided with a meal and small amounts of money to enable them get around. Those who were able to secure jobs early enough had time to save and move into their own rented accommodation. In a way, this brotherhood can be said to have motivated those who had no social capital network to consider migrating in the knowledge that once released from the detention camps, they would have accommodation for three months, time enough to get a job or have someone to host them. Most migrants go to Europe in the hope that they will be given assistance by one of such brotherhood organisations. The residence thus serves as a safety net and a place where one might feel at home, and most of all serves as a depository of information about job opportunities. Those in New York and Italy have a huge network that supports fellow migrants in such cases (see Babou, 2002; Kaag, 2008). These confraternities, apart from providing accommodation, also create job networks that help members look for jobs, and as a result of the economic crisis, have increasingly become the preferred way for members entering the economic sector, where soft loans are provided to members. This is the case in Spain, where migrants are increasingly seeking help from the nearest religious association or *dahira* as a result of the latest world economic downturn.

### Strangers/luck

It can be supposed that Diallo's statement that "a person cannot betray his destiny" can also be applied to some migrants who find themselves in Spain out of sheer luck thanks to strangers or to being in the right place at the right time when a boat is about to leave. I will narrate the story of Emeka to illustrate this. Emeka is a Nigerian migrant who left Nigeria a year ago and moved to Mauritania in search of a boat to leave, but on two occasions was duped by fake middlemen who went away with his money. With no money left, he resolved to go back to Nigeria to look for money and return for another attempt. But by a stroke of luck, he met Moussa and narrated his tale. Moussa now tells Emeka's story:

*"One day, by chance, I met a Nigerian named Emeka, and we fell into a discussion. He said he didn't know to whom he could give his money because two people had disappeared with his money, and since then he had not seen them. He*

*told me he still wanted to travel, but he didn't trust the middlemen and he no longer had any money. I told him I would pay his way through and find a pirogue that would take him. He didn't believe me. Two days before departure, I asked him to get ready. It was then that he believed me and gave me the rest of his money (150,000 francs). I gave it back to him, telling him he would need it when he arrived. Once in Tenerife six days later, they were released when Spain won the World Cup, and he was lucky to find a generous boss who helped him to get his residence and work permits.” (Interview: Saint Louis, 22/09/08).<sup>26</sup>*

This is a classic example of someone whose fate depended entirely on luck and on meeting strangers. At one point, Moussa thought he had missed his luck because he had ceded his space to Emeka, but reasoned that even if he had kept his space and travelled, the outcome would not have been the same, as it might not have been his destiny to succeed.

## **Conclusion**

Networks, as we have seen, are a *sine qua non* in boat migration. It is not individuals, but households, that mobilise resources and support, and make decisions about who migrates in the family, as we saw in Chapter Four, particularly in Ahmed's case. Social networks and households simultaneously mediate the macro structural changes, facilitate the migration response to these changes, and perpetuate migration as a self-sustaining social process.

## **Notes**

1. « Ils m'ont avoué qu'ils avaient honte. Ils ne voulaient que je continue à m'occuper d'eux. Ils voulaient trouver un moyen plus facile pour décanter la situation. J'avais confiance en eux mais j'avais peur. J'ai retiré de l'argent pour leur donner. Un million pour les deux. Ils sont partis à Saint Louis. »
2. « À plusieurs reprises, au moins quatre fois, je lui en ai parlé. S'il part quelque part, si je ne suis pas d'accord. Il ne gagnera rien. En mon temps, je travaillais seul. Partout il peut partir, si je ne suis pas content. Il ne s'en sortira pas, il ne réussira pas. Si je suis pas d'accord même si tu voyais le plus grand marabout Serigne Bara Mbacké et qu'il récite tous les corans du monde, tu n'auras rien. »

3. « Je vous dis que l'émigration clandestine, clandestinement c'est l'effet de quitter le territoire Sénégalais pour aller en Espagne parce que en haut mer il y a beaucoup des vagues et beaucoup des problemes, et puis notre pirogues ne sont pas element résistées. Avec ces causes là que j'ai dit à mes enfants de ne pas partir en Espagne. La pêche ne peut pas nourrir son home mais le Dieu peut nous nourrir. »
4. « C'était ma premiere fois que j'avais entendu ça, mais, bon, comme je suis l'ami de ma mere, je suis retourné à Pekine pour parler avec elle . . . maman m'a dit bon tu as decide, y a pas de probleme tu peux partir. »
5. In Senegalese culture, upon the death of a father and head of the family, his property is distributed equally among the wife or wives and children or sold and the money distributed accordingly based on precise stipulations in the Koran.
6. « Dans la religion Musulman, le prophète nous a dit la maman c'est lui qui est plus proche de son enfant. Même dans la prière si tu es en train de prier et que ta maman t'appelle une fois tu dois repondre et si c'est le papa, tu dois attendre la triosème fois que tu puisse repondre. Pour te montrer la grandeur de la maman envers son enfant. »
7. « Nos maris sont polygames et nous, les épouses, nous nous livrons à une véritable competition. Ainsi, la première qui parvient à faire partir un fils est considéré comme étant la meilleure épouse. »
8. A boat migrant/captain who, after being released ,moved to Italy where he has family members.
9. « c'est la manqué de concentration des mes parents qui n'ont pas voulu que je reste en Espagne. »
10. « Va là-bas, même si tu es un multi-millardaire je ne veux un sous de votre argent. »
11. « La Croix Rouge m'avait demandé si j'ai quelqu'un qui peut venir me chercher, je l'ai dit oui en croyant que mon cousin va venir me prendre. Mais quand j'ai appelé ce dernier, il m'a dit qu'en ce moment il ne peut pas car il a un problem avec son épouse Toubaab. Sans personne, on était obligé de me rapatrier après vingt sept jours en detention. Je n'avais pas de chance quoi, peut être c'est Dieu qui a entendu les mécontements de ma maman. »
12. « On a besoin des information parce qu'en ce period tout ma promotion 1980-1985 étaient dans les rues et information circulait partout. »

13. « La pirogue de Modou est arrive sain et sauf, nous tous on va partir avec lui. »
14. « Ils préconisent toujours de ne pas prendre les pirogues de Kayaar, Hann, qu'il faut prendre les pirogues de Guet Ndar, à Saint Louis. Ce sont eux qui connaissent le chemin. C'est à cet endroit qu'on recrutait. Ce sont des grands pêcheurs qui connaissent le chemin et la mer. Ils se perdent rarement. Ils peuvent rester un an en mer sans revenir sur la terre ferme. Ce sont eux qui ont découvert le chemin. »
15. « On avait parlé de son depart et moi j'étais d'accord pour qu'il part, parce qu'ici il n'y a pas le travail. Etant pêcheur il ne pouvait pas satisfaire le besoin de la famille. Mais depuis son depart il y a un changement dans nos vies. Il arrive à envoyer de l'argent malgré l'effet qu'il loue les papiers pour pouvoir travailler pendant trois à quatre mois. C'est toujours plus mieux qu'avant. »
16. « Comment quelqu'un que tu as epousé par amour, tu peux oser laisser lui suicider comme ça. C'est parce qu'elles ne pensent qu'à l'argent qu'ils vont envoyer, ça c'est inadmissible. »
17. « C'est très difficile à dormir car ton portable sonne 24/24, et parce que le phenomène n'était pas contrôlé, il y avait trop de magouille du côté policiers qui te demandent de l'argent et aussi de prendre les membres de leur famille gratuit. Mais la plus difficile c'est le jour qu'ils ont commencés le voyage. Pendant tous ces jours je n'arrive pas à dormir, je suis anxieux pour savoir s'il n y a pas un problème sur le trajet. C'est après leur arrivage que je peux dormir tranquille. »
18. R : Au retour je suis resté deux mois. J'ai construit ma propre pirogue.  
Q : Donc le deuxième voyage c'était avec ta propre pirogue?  
R : Ouui, ma propre pirogue et c'est moi qui ai recruté les gens.  
J'ai recruté 50 personnes.  
Q : Pour chaque personne, on t'a payé combien?  
R : Pour chaque personne j'ai encaissé 300.000 francs CFA.  
Q : Donc en tout tu avais combien?  
R : En tout j'avais 9.000.000 francs CFA.  
Q : Où est passé cet argent?  
R : J'ai acheté un moteur.  
Q : Le moteur c'est combien?

R : 2.500.000 francs.

Q : Et le reste?

R : J'ai acheté du carburant à 1.600.000 francs.

Q : Donc tout l'argent est parti dans le voyage?

R : Moi je ne pouvais pas encaisser l'argent des gens et rester sans partir avec eux en Europe.

Q : Donc tu as effectué le voyage, et tu es arrivé?

R : Je suis arrivé le 15 août 2006, non le 13 août 2006.

Q : A Ténériffe?

R : Non, à Las Palmas.

Q : Et pourquoi tu es retourné?

R : Le président a fait retourner les gens avec les avions. Après je suis retourné.

19. « le propriétaire ne pourra pas organiser sans moi. Je suis le cerveau mais c'est lui qui détient les moyens. »
20. « Il y a mon gâteau et mon café qui m'attend un bon jour insha-Allah. »
21. « Nous recrutons des gens mais on le fait en douceur et pas en force. Nous te demandons si tu veux partir en Espagne, si tu étais au courant des pirogues qui partent ? Si tu es un guerrier tu te décides. Tu veux partir nous te demandons 400.000 francs. Tu peux négocier jusqu'à 350.000 francs et on s'accorde sur le prix. Nous t'encourageons et te remontons le morale, et ceci te donne de la confiance. Tu peux garder l'argent jusqu'au moment du départ et tu peux venir avec des amis. Avant le jour de départ tu dois confirmer à l'avance en nous laissant ton numéro de téléphone. C'est seulement au dernier moment qu'on précisera le lieu et l'heure de depart. »
22. « On ne peut pas contacter n'importe qui. Il ya des gens, des policiers qui veulent filtrer le réseau. Donc on ne peut jamais savoir l'intention et les motivations du client qui se présente. Beaucoup de piroguiers se sont fait arrêté avant leur depart ... Les gens qui veulent voyager viennent et on leur donne les contacts. C'est comme la vente de la drogue, il ne faut jamais avoir confiance aux gens. Tu donnes des informations et à notre niveau on vérifie toujours si elles sont exactes sans jamais prendre des risques. »

23. The trip was finally cancelled because the conveyer was arrested.
24. « Mon ami m’a emmené jusqu’à la maison là-bas, j’ai demandé, les voisins ne voulaient pas parler parcequ’ils ne voulaient pas que leur secret sort. »
25. « À Saint Louis on est resté presque une semaine pour attendre que la liste soit complète. On était dans la maison de sa belle mère. On contactait des gens et ils venaient petit à petit. 82 personnes ont été rassemblées et dispersées dans les maisons de ses connaissances pour la nourriture et l’hébergement. »
26. « Un jour, j’ai rencontré un Nigérien par hasard qui s’appelé Emeka et on a commencé à discuter. Après il me dit qu’il ne sait à qui confier son argent parce que deux personnes ont bouffé son argent et depuis lors il n’a jamais vu les gars. Il m’a dit qu’il veut toujours voyager mais il n’a plus confiance au rabbateurs car il ne sait pas à qui s’adresser, mais en plus il n’a plus de l’argent. Je lui ai dit que je vais le prendre en charge et m’assurer qu’il part avec la pirogue, laquelle je travaille avec le passeur. Il ne me croyait pas toujours, deux jours avant le départ de la pirogue, je lui ai demandé de s’apprêter car le départ est proche. C’est en ce moment là où il me croyait, et il m’a donné tout le restant de l’argent qu’il avait, (150.000 ougiyar) je lui ai remis l’argent en lui disant qu’il aura besoin de ça lorsqu’il arrive. Une fois arrivé en Tenerife six jours après on leur a tous relâché quand l’Espagne a gagné la coupe du monde, et il a tombé sur un patron très bénévole qui lui a aidé à trouver les papiers de séjour et le permis de travail. »

#### Introduction

Fisheries are one of the principal economic sectors of Senegal, and constitute a strategic resource for the country given its lack of significant mineral resources. According to Fall (2006: 93; *Le Matin* of Monday 6 November 2000: 4), “fishing is the leading export sector of Senegal with 30% of export earnings. With a total turnover of 278 billion CFAF, the sector accounts for 2.3% of national GDP and 11% of the primary sector.”<sup>1</sup> Besides the revenue it brings into government coffers, it also creates employment for hundreds of families and provides a much-needed source of protein to most Senegalese because of its affordability. However, the full potential of the ‘blue gold’ is not harnessed and fishing has been the victim of *laissez-faire*. This seems to be a trend in the fishing regions in most of Africa (See Hoorweg *et al.*, 2008; Overà, 2005), as the fishers have to grapple with intensive fishing and increased economic activity leading to more sewage and waste disposal and industrial pollution. This is particularly true for Senegal, where the industrial zone is situated very close to the sea and all the toxic waste is disposed there, and the main sewage canals empty into the sea.

Fishing is practised principally by the Guet Ndariens and Lebous. According to the fishers, the fishing sector of late has seen a sharp rise in the number of fishermen due to unemployment. They maintain that this is due to long spells of drought resulting in a decline in agriculture, and those who have no means of subsistence join the fishing sector. With no basic knowledge of fishing, their main concern is to come back from the sea with a catch irrespective of the species and size; hence their actions contribute to the depletion of fish stocks. Bene (2003, 2004) distinguishes between endogenous and exogenous explanations of poverty among fishers:

“endogenous explanation emphasizes low levels of natural resources and industrial related factors such as open access to resources and the influx of people into the fishing sector. All of which contributes

to overexploitation. The exogenous explanation looks at the fishery sector in relation to other sectors of the economy and argues that one should expect a wage-equilibrium between the fishery and non-fishery sectors" (cited in Hoorweg et al 2008: 256).

These are some of the concerns this chapter seeks to address. Prior to boat migration, fishers were plagued by exorbitant fuel prices and the high cost of fishing equipment, and when boat migration set in, it was welcomed by the fishers, who took centre stage in organisation, transportation and migration (see Chapter Three). This no doubt created a vacuum in the fisheries sector, and the government was quick to intervene by signing an agreement with the Government of Spain to repatriate the migrants.

This chapter seeks to analyse the role of the Government in safeguarding the fisheries sector. Has the Government put in place adequate policies to help mitigate the continuous plundering of fish stocks (as opined by the fishers)? To what extent have the fishers also sought to preserve and safeguard the fish stocks, thereby safeguarding their livelihood? What measures have been put in place to curb the migration of fishers? Are these groups of persons involved in decision-making that affects them? To what extent has the bilateral agreement signed between Senegal and Spain helped to reintegrate the returnees into their respective communities? What are their expectations from the Government as regards subsidies? These questions shall be analysed mostly from the point of view and based on the accounts of repatriated migrants and fishers.

## **Policies regulating fisheries in Senegal**

*"Senegal is the only country in the sub-region, from Mauritania to Angola, where access to the sea is free. You do not get up one fine day and start this activity. Sometimes, people who don't even know how to swim become fishermen. The introduction of fishing licences has been the outcome of broad-based consultations involving all the stakeholders."* (Le Soleil of Tuesday 05 September 2005).<sup>2</sup>

This opening quote is from the Senegalese Minister of Maritime Economy, Djibo Kâ, speaking at the launching of fishing licences for fishers. But this begs the question of why fishing licences are being



introduced at a time when fishery is considered to bring in the highest earnings to Senegal or when boat migration is at its apex. This tends to corroborate the complaints of the fishers, who believe that the fisheries sector has been neglected by the Government for long, and the ripple effect is overexploitation and mass exodus by the fishers.

*“The Government does not help us fishers of Guet Ndar in any way. If the Government helped us, many things would be less difficult. But this is not the case. The Government takes the wrong decisions. In Senegal, nothing is protected; the boats are allowed to destroy.”* (Interview with Oumar: Saint Louis, 14/10/08).<sup>3</sup>

Oumar’s remarks support those made by the Minister of Fishery above.

Most fishermen confirmed that during the Presidency of Abdou Diouf and his predecessor, reforms were carried out to support the fishing sector. One of such was granting soft loans to fishermen to purchase boats and engines and creating a central fish market in Dakar. Newspaper articles confirm these accounts, as seen in *Le Soleil* of Friday 10 March 1997; “The State injects 12 billion francs into the fisheries sector”<sup>4</sup>. The project was expected to be carried in two phases within two years. The first phase would cost 8 billion CFA francs, of which 2 billion francs would be invested in artisanal fishing. These funds were intended to provide equipment such as boats, engines, nets and refrigerated cars to professionals on interest-free loans. In addition, an ice factory would be built.

In all the neighbourhoods we visited, this is the sort of help the fishermen were requesting from the present government. But if the opening quote is anything to go by, it is evident that very little has been done to help the fishers in terms of granting them interest-free loans without requiring for collaterals such as lands and houses, to purchase equipment. For this reason, the fishermen are wary of the government and show no trust whatsoever in loans the government intends to negotiate with them. An elderly fisher summarizes concisely the attitude of the government:

*“We are afraid of the Government. They are more educated than us in French. They can deceive you and take your money. That is what is happening to us now. Before giving us the smallest loans, they ask for our house documents. If they lend*

*us 15 million francs, we can buy a pirogue with 10 million. You can give this money as advance payment for a pirogue. At the end of the month, if you cannot pay the rest of the cost of the pirogue, you will not be allowed to work. The loans are short-term. Instead of extending them to cover 8 months, they force people to repay them over 4 months. When the loan is repaid, they ask for an additional amount of 400,000 francs in claims.” (Saint Louis, 22/10/08).<sup>5</sup>*



*A group of elderly retired fishers talking about fishing in the past comparing it to the present scenario*

An atmosphere of mistrust has been established by the government, and it would take a lot of hard work to change the attitude of fishers towards the government. Given how much income artisanal fishing brings into the coffers of the State, it would be, I believe, in the interest of the State to seek common ground with them and salvage their livelihood.

With obsolete engines and boats, fishermen say, there is no way they can compete with the fishing trawlers. Their livelihoods are thus endangered.

There are indications that the government is aware of the problems besetting this sector, as seen from the different meetings and workshops convened. Soon after taking office in November 2000, President Abdoulaye Wade convened a meeting of all the

different actors of the sector to ‘redefine fishery policies in Senegal’. Most fishers see this as a ploy, with the government trying to be seen as resolving the issue, whereas in actual fact no action is taken after the workshop. Their scepticism was confirmed when the first Minister of Fisheries, Oumar Sarr, called for revitalisation of the fisheries sector to reflect the current times: “[T]he fisheries sector needs a new governance and management strategy based on transparency, participation and adaptation to the realities and needs of the State and professionals.”<sup>6</sup> (*Le Matin* of Monday 6 November 2000: 4). Juxtaposing this statement with that of the Minister in 2005 (opening quote), we can conclude that five years down the lane, no concrete action has been taken to alleviate the crisis in this sector. Little wonder we hear remarks like ‘Senegal is the place where decisions are taken but never implemented’. In the sections that follow, a catalogue of issues will be discussed in an attempt to analyse whether the government is effectively addressing the crisis in this sector.

### **Issuance of fishing licences to foreign boats**

The most significant complaint of the fishers was the much-vaunted agreement ‘*fameuse accord*’ signed between Senegal and the EU, which is often referred to as the start of the crisis within this sector. Demba, who is very vocal against this accord, holds the Government responsible for their plight and the laissez-faire attitude the government has adopted by letting everyone in to fish:

*“The much-vaunted French agreements caused much loss. The European Union wants to buy fish in Africa and sell it in its countries. France has more fish than Senegal. This was not the case until recently; that is why they come to steal our resources. They have signed agreements with the Government. They gave money in exchange for access by their fishermen to our coasts.”*<sup>7</sup>

Abdou Salam Fall (2006: 97-98) acknowledges the benefits of this fishing agreement with the government, such as the amount of money it injects into state coffers and the job opportunities it creates for the locals, given that fifty percent of the workforce on each ship is supposed to be Senegalese. However, despite these benefits, the disadvantages seem to outweigh the gains because the agreement also contributes to overexploitation, as that the trawlers fish for the

same species that are sought after by local fishermen and consumers. This, in a way, exerts pressure on the already depleting stocks, exacerbating the depletion.

Despite the praises for former President Abdou Diouf, some fishers still hold him responsible for their misery as the signing of fishing agreements started with his regime, he having granted licences to Chinese and Korean trawlers:

*"There is no fish because the Government of Abdou Diouf granted fishing licences to Chinese and Korean ships; their industrial boats have swept away all the fish we had here in Senegal."*<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note how non-fishermen also attribute the plight of dwindling fish stocks to the granting of licences to foreign boats:

*"The fisheries sector, which formerly employed many people and thousands of families, is now declining. The Senegalese government granted fishing licences to cargo ships belonging to developed countries. They come and sift through our seas, thereby jeopardising the future and survival of an entire group of people."*(Interview with Diop, Dakar: 23/08/08).<sup>9</sup>

Although the exploitation by the EU is limited only to two percent (Fall, 2006: 98), they are blamed for the overexploitation of the country's resources. With this in mind, the immediate question that crops up is if the EU is responsible for only two percent of the catch, why is it facing such widespread accusations of stock depletion? We believe the answer lies in the opening remark by the Minister of Fisheries, for if a free-for-all attitude has been adopted by the government, it means that vessels that are not registered to fish in Senegalese waters would take advantage of the laxity of government policies, a thing some trawlers are doing with the collaboration of some fishermen in return for bribes.

It should also be noted that these trawlers make fishing very difficult for the small boats/pirogues. In a similar finding by Bonnardel (1992: 244) and in response to the above question, she argues that:

*"Many of these industrial boats, both Senegalese and foreign, practise destructive trawling. National trawlers, which can also operate in areas between 6000 and 12,000 miles, deplete the stock and destroy the set nets to the detriment of the*

*Guet Ndariens. Since 1980, there have been more and more incidents between them and the boat owners. Furthermore, beyond 12,000 miles, some foreign boats which have not signed any agreement with Senegal enter the Senegalese zone from the Mauritanian zone. Various forms of piracy and plunder are said to be the result of the sharp decline in fish production by the Guet Ndariens since the end of the 1970s.”<sup>10</sup>*

This extensive quote from Bonnardel shows the extent to which the trawlers have been acting with impunity for a considerable length of time, the effects of which are felt by the local fishers. It also confirms the statement by the Minister of Fisheries that Senegalese waters are open to all.

### **Abuse of concessions to artisanal fishers and local boats**

As part of a government concession to artisanal fishing, certain areas have been reserved only for pirogues, with access to trawlers strictly forbidden. This, one would say, is a laudable decision to protect artisanal fisheries. But then the question is, is this rule observed? The government gave concession to artisanal fishers and local fishers with trawlers. The former have exclusive rights to fish within 6,000 sea miles from the shore and can go beyond, but trawlers are not allowed within this area reserved for artisanal fishers. Local trawlers fish from 7,000 to 12,000 sea miles including the foreign trawlers, but the difference is that the foreign trawlers come only for a period of two months, while the local trawlers fish for four months from June to September. From these 12,000 sea miles up to 150,000 sea miles under the jurisdiction of Senegal, other trawlers that have signed an agreement with Senegal such as France, Spain, Italy etc, or countries with seasonal contracts as earlier mentioned, can fish in this zone (see also Bonnardel, 1992: 244). According to my informant from the Department of Fisheries, the trawlers often do not respect the different zones, especially those reserved for the pirogues. He categorically states:

*“The Senegalese boats do not respect the fishing and reproduction zones. All boats under our radar in 1982-1988 have taken the Senegalese flag because they do not want to pay fees; they want to pay less fees and fish not far from the coast, as well as avoid taking an observer officer on board.”(Kayar 05/11/08)<sup>11</sup>*

It should be noted that licence fees depend on where the boat is coming from. In addition, they are not always compelled to pay the hefty fines that are meted out to defaulters because, as he puts it, when the culprit is taken to the 'boss' he pays a bribe and nothing enters state coffers. Dejectedly, he says "There is much corruption, and we can do nothing about it at our level"<sup>12</sup>. The Senegalese boats mentioned above belong to foreigners (usually Chinese and Korean) who, unwilling to pay the fees required of them and keen to fish for longer periods and closer to the shore, pay Senegalese fish exporters to register the boats under their companies. After this, some of them, according to the fishers, enter the unauthorized zone reserved for artisanal fishers and breeding areas. The fishers also hold that due to the large number of registered boats, some of the boats encroach into the areas reserved for artisanal fishing, and most of the time they go unchecked. This may also explain why of a total of one hundred and twenty-seven trawlers registered in Senegal, one hundred and eighteen are registered as local fishing trawlers.

While the fishers lay the blame solely on the government for not doing enough to protect the fisheries sector and the fishers, there is evidence to suggest that the fishers themselves also fail to respect gestation periods or gestation zones. Fishers with smaller boats talk of how bigger boats that go fishing for days disable their radar signals at night so that they cannot be detected by the Department of Fisheries' radar. They are thus able to fish during gestation periods and in the reserved areas. This is also to the disadvantage of smaller boats which, because of their size, are unable to go farther out to the sea.

### **Need for greater concerted efforts by the fishers**

If the old adage "united we stand, divided we fall" is true, then its application to the fishers' situation would be quite beneficiary. One would imagine that given their numbers and the importance of their profession to the economic sector, the fishers would have a strong labour union and would act as a bulwark against foreign invaders or those who do not respect neither fishing zones nor gestation periods. The need for greater concerted efforts, for example, would be paramount to protecting their profession and making their voices heard. Ndiaye, one of the few elderly fishers who speak French, vents his frustration at how union members are far more concerned about their own interests than promoting the interest of the group.

*“Groups and associations have been formed. They talk of individual problems instead of laying emphasis on the general and collective good. If you have a wound on your foot and you treat your head, you will not get well. The leaders of associations are powerful, but the fishermen have nothing. I have a membership card. In Dakar, I lobbied the mayor and the government, and I participated in seminars, to no avail.”*<sup>13</sup>

Driven by personal interest and an insatiable appetite for profit, the fishers, it would appear, have consistently failed to respect the gestation periods, and have even colluded with foreign boats to flout the law. Since foreign boats and trawlers cannot fish within the 6,000 sea miles area, they hire local pirogues for a period of 3 to 4 months. They then anchor their boats and trawlers just beyond the limit, while the pirogues go to fish each day within the authorised area and bring the catch to the boat. They all recognise the need to enforce this aspect of the law by sending coast guards to patrol the sea constantly, but it would appear that nobody is willing to steer clear of the area until coast guards are deployed.

The younger fishers, on their part, have sought to set up an association of young fishermen, but, according to their leader, face strong resistance from the elderly fishers, who see the move as a rebellion. Because there is no real elected body that serves the interests of the fishers, whenever there is a problem involving the government, a group is handpicked to represent them. The same persons are not always retained, and this disrupts the continuity of their efforts.

One remarkable change is the spectacular increase in the number and size of boats, and concomitantly the number of fishers. This has no doubt put a lot of strain on the resources. The Department of Fisheries therefore intervened and suggested that fishers should not all go fishing at the same time; they should take turns in going out in order to curb overexploitation, obtain better prices, and ensure that all their catch would be sold. Quite often, when fishers come back with too much fish, this gives an added advantage to the *mareyeurs* who tend to offer prices below the market value. Not wanting to completely lose out, the fishers are compelled to sell without any profit. The fishermen rejected the suggestion to fish in turns. My informant acknowledges that the Department of Fisheries still has a long way to go to change the attitudes of the fishers. He concludes that

*"They are born artisanal fishers, grow up in artisanal fishing, and will die in artisanal fishing; this is their method and lifestyle. Their philosophy does not allow them to live better. They see only profit."*<sup>14</sup>

If the fishers' major problem is the Government's 'bad decisions' as they claim, one would expect them to keep their environment clean before apportioning blame to the government for directing all sewage into their backyard (the sea). The shores have been reduced to refuse dumps. The images of children with basins of dirty water, competing to be the first to empty the basin into the sea, or those of little children defecating on the shore is still very vivid. Basic hygiene is absent, and if the city council does not come to clean the shores (which it does twice a month), the fishers will live in the filth.

### **Attention to other sectors over fishery**

Although Senegal is a Sahelian country and depends totally on rain fed agriculture, the government is trying to encourage the population to engage in agriculture through various plans. From 2001 to 2008, the government launched five plans – all geared towards agriculture, and so far none for the fisheries sector. The most recent of these plans is GOANA (*Grand Offensive Agriculture pour la Nourriture Abundance* [Major Agricultural Offensive for Abundant Food]). Mindful of the fact that aquaculture is part of agriculture, one would expect GOANA to include fisheries. But this has not been the case, and the fishers have expressed their dismay at having been left out. Demba thinks that it does not make sense to talk about agriculture without fisheries:

*"We have heard that the government wants to implement the GOANA. I thought the GOANA also concerned the fishermen, but so far we have no information about it. The government has not involved us in the GOANA. If the GOANA is intended to help feed the populations, the first to contribute are the fishermen. They have talked about the GOANA, but it has not affected us. The government has not involved us in the GOANA. That is what hurts us. The fishermen are tired, and our government does not help us. The government forgets that there are fishermen in the country. The fisheries sector is a priority sector which brings in a lot of foreign currency, more than agriculture or any other sector. But the government gives priority to farmers and we are abandoned. We are not involved in decision making. We are marginalized."*<sup>15</sup>



This notwithstanding, some fishers with farmlands in Richard Toll (a very fertile area to the north of Saint Louis, noted also for rice farming) compiled the documents needed to be granted some money and filed them. For instance, in March 2008 one of my informants filed his documents, but was not selected. He needed about 500,000 FCA francs (approximately 800 euros) to change his life forever and give up migration, but his hopes for the success of GOANA were dashed to the ground. According to them, not having a ‘godfather’ in the political arena, who would support their application, means that “we are condemned”,<sup>16</sup> as they put it.

*Mareyeurs*, like fishers, have also wondered why the fisheries sector was not included in the GOANA:

*“The GOANA Plan does not directly affect the fisheries sector, although yesterday the Minister was here and we talked about it. The GOANA is limited to agriculture, and does not make much sense. For self-sufficiency, the population needs to have a source of protein. And that source of protein is fisheries. Fisheries and agriculture should have one Ministry or a Ministry and a Secretariat of State. These two activities are carried out in Kayar and many fishermen are involved in agriculture. Some of them are engaged in both, and should be encouraged. This would save reserves. During some periods, people should be forced to take a biological rest. If biological rest is imposed for two months, people will go back to the farm. The GOANA activity should benefit fishing and farming. It aims at food self-sufficiency. This country should therefore not focus on farming alone. We also need protein that comes from the sea and livestock. Farming has the same status as stockbreeding and fishing.”*<sup>17</sup>

A repatriated migrant tells how he is willing to return to fishing, but is discouraged by the government’s policy favouring agriculture over fishing:

*“I left for Spain because for ten years fishing was stagnant and the price of equipment was rising. When clandestine migration came, the government did not assist us. The government does not care about fishermen. Farmers receive assistance, but nothing is done for us.”* (Kayar, 18/10/08)<sup>18</sup>

Inasmuch as the fishers would like to participate in farming, they are still very sceptical about the success of GOANA in light of lack of success of previous programmes. Their scepticism is well-

founded because previous programmes have never met their targets. Analysing the various programmes, one of my informants said:

*“Between 2000 and today, we have had five plans, which all failed. The Five Year Agriculture Plan was launched in 2001 and it failed. After the five-year Plan, there was the Jaaxyha Plan in 2004. Everyone was involved – the youth, the army and intellectuals. But it didn’t work; when the youths were discouraged and started taking the pirogue to Spain, the government went to Spain and signed an agreement with the Spanish government indicating it had a plan – REVA (Return to Agriculture). If you give me money, I will call back the Senegalese and give them work. This was the start of the REVA Plan because Spain funded the project. The REVA Plan failed, and was replaced by the Accelerate Growth Strategy for Senegal. It also failed, and today the GOANA Plan has been launched. Let’s hope that it will succeed.”<sup>19</sup>*

From the informants, we get to understand that the Government’s attitude of focussing mainly on agriculture to the detriment of fisheries creates a recipe of entrenched mistrust between the fishers and the Government, and lack of faith in the Government’s project. This is because it does not address the needs of those who are in need but rather, one is expected to have political godfathers in order to be included in the projects. The policies for the fisheries sector have not been well calculated and would appear to have been the trigger to boat migration as we have heard from the fishers and the *mareyeurs*. But, as already mentioned, the fishers’ attitude towards practising sustainable fishing is also endangering their livelihood. If the fishers could harness the resources, it would go a long way to providing employment for them, given that some of their reasons for migrating are unemployment and dwindling stocks.

## **European Union/African Policies to curb boat migration**

### ***European Union (EU) Policies***

The policies instituted by the EU have essentially focused on turning away the migrants and signing agreements with the sending and transit countries to re-admit returnees. This, they argue, is aimed at poverty reduction and development, given the huge amounts of money that are given to the countries concerned. But the underlying

fact is that the EU wants to get rid of the illegal migrants that it sees as a constant threat to national security in EU countries (in addition to other economic, social and political reasons) and is keen to see the problem addressed by the sending and transit countries. Also, in the aftermath of September 11 2001, migrants have increasingly been linked to terrorists because the receiving countries fear they could easily be bought over by terrorist organisations (Castles and Miller, 2003). The repatriation of migrants either to the transit countries from which they came or to their countries of origin is also linked to this increasing tendency to associate migration with terrorism.

In instituting these policies, Europe reinforces the wall around ‘fortress Europe’ that defines its boundaries within that fortress to keep out the wave of migrants (Crosby 2007). This is partly because migration is seen as a development failure rather than as a constituent part of broader social and economic transformation processes (De Haas, 2007). Confirming this failure, the governor of the Canary Islands, José Segura, says that “it is not the fault of the Spanish government. It is the fault of the government of those countries that, in effect, are demonstrating a remarkable incapacity to provide opportunities for development to their youth” (Brea, 2006). In adopting such policies, the EU and the sending country fail to tackle the problem at its root. And as De Haas (*ibid*) goes on to argue, as long as the cause of migration is not tackled from its root, migration will always be an issue, and the fact that clandestine migration is still going on shows just how the EU and the sending countries have failed to address the root causes of migration. Besides, it shows just how the walls of the European fortress are crumbling.

In a way, the failure to curb the stream of migration flows stems from the fact that the policies are based on “short-term and narrow views of the migration process” (Castles, 2007: 30). Arguing further, he (*Ibid*, 2007: 30) posits that it is important to look at the “entire migratory process, starting from the initial movement right through settlement, community formation and emergence of new generations in the migration country”. The policies of the EU, we may argue, are top-down, without the involvement of the migrants. The agreements signed with sending countries are largely dictated by

the receiving countries, with the sending countries endorsing the wishes of the latter because of the huge sums of money they receive as development and military aid.

### ***Policing sea and land borders***

The Dutch Press Agency (*Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau*) APB carried a report on their Website on 1 September 2006:

*"There seems to be no end to the explosion of migrants from Africa. In the past two days over 800 migrants have arrived the Canary Isles. 9000 have already been intercepted in 2006. In August their number was higher than the whole of 2005. There is an increasing impression that migrants are streaming in from all sides and that there is a growing need to check migration flows"* (Zoomers *et al.*, 2008: 2).

This shows that the only effective policy deemed necessary by the West is to seek necessary solutions to stop the flow of migrants who are seen more as a problem. But also the terms used in describing the influx of migrants – flow, flood, stream, all seem to carry the connotation of destruction; in particular, the minors are described as an ‘immigration avalanche’. The Regional President of the Canaries, Adan Martin, says it is dangerous for his administration to have responsibility for the upbringing of the minors. (BBC News, Madrid; report by Danny Wood). Besides, the West is caught up in the media scare and the overmediatisation of the migration issue, and has come to believe that the only way of reducing the influx is to stop the flow without actually taking time to think about the repercussions and alternative means of dealing with the situation. This perception of migrants only confirms the long-standing notion held by Westerners that boat migration is a plague on their societies, and all avenues must be explored to reinforce fortress Europe.

In this regard, Spain, which is most affected, has taken drastic measures, including air and sea patrols, to police its borders. The Spanish Government introduced the ‘hi-tech integrated surveillance system (SIVE) that operates in Spain in Southern Andalusia – the Strait of Gibraltar, and most recently in the Canary Islands (Maccanico, 2006; Kim, 2004; De Haas, 2007). This only exacerbated the situation and increased the number of migrants

who sought alternative routes from Senegal and other West African countries. Overwhelmed by the increase in the number of migrants attempting to reach Spain, the latter sought the help of the EU. The political response to the issue continues to be driven by short-sighted prejudice: further military measures to render impermeable Europe's Southern borders.

As a result, the Schengen Treaty of 1991 was reinforced with a view to enforcing the strict immigration policies (Kim, 2004: 301). In addition, a number of operations to patrol the sea routes between the EU and neighbouring regions were implemented. Coordinated by the EU, FRONTEX, involving 13 countries, was launched with the deployment of airplanes, helicopters and patrol boats to patrol the routes between the Canary Islands and Cape Verde, Mauritania and Senegal (Maccanico, 2006). The fishers, on their part, are bent on migrating, and vow to look for other avenues. They claim European vessels have emptied their seas and make life hard for them, and do not welcome them into their country: *"they have emptied our seas, and have made fishing unprofitable. And now they don't want us."*<sup>20</sup> This notwithstanding, hi-tech surveillance continues to prove futile, and the number of migrants has been on the rise, necessitating further severe measures. One of such was to ask passing naval vessels not to give assistance to pirogues found at sea or answer distress calls. But this measure goes against the maritime code, which stipulates that all captains of ships must give help to any person found at sea in danger of death.

A case in point is that of a crew of a Spanish fishing boat who rescued 51 migrants from a boat that was in distress and was denied permission to dock in Malta because that country did not want to take charge of the migrants on the ship. With the boat anchored offshore for six days, in a situation of extreme overcrowding and with some migrants falling ill, widespread media coverage forced a deal to be struck, whereby Malta and Spain agreed to share the burden of repatriating the migrants (Maccanico, 2006).

In a similar move, the Italian Government detained a Tunisian crew for rescuing a boat load of 44 migrants and bringing to Lampeduza. The crew was accused of being traffickers, and detained for six weeks. This caused diplomatic row between Tunis and Rome, until the men were released (*Jeune Afrique*, No: 2437 of 23-29 September 2007: 60-63).

The EU policies sharply contradict the call for globalization that envisions greater economic and cultural interchange, which it seems to advocate. Yet from every indication, the EU favours selective globalization that opens its borders only to the movement of information, commodities and capital, and yet is closed to people, especially the unskilled.

## **Bilateral protocol**

### ***Spain/Senegal***

Despite these stringent measures, the migrants seem to move faster in devising other routes and means of avoiding the patrol. This means the EU has had to review its policy: it struck deals with sending countries to readmit migrants and to clamp down on migration, as well as to criminalize migration in exchange for development aid, financial support for border controls and military equipment.

In this connection, at the end of May 2006, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, after meeting with Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade, announced that Spain had struck a deal with Senegal under which Senegalese would be repatriated in exchange for aid (Mitchell, 2006). In June 2007, this was followed by a development aid package of 20 million Euros for the REVA Plan (Fall & Samb, 2008). In July, in a further move smacking of desperation, the Spanish government signed an unprecedented agreement with Senegal to allow the Guardia Civil to patrol Senegalese waters to prevent migrants from leaving their homeland (Ekine, 2006). These patrols proved useful as they significantly curbed the number of migrants leaving Senegal. But as usual, the migrants sought another route, and they found sanctuary in the Mauritanian coastal towns of Nouadhibou and Nouakchott. And so migration moved from Senegal to Mauritania, where there was still some *laissez-faire*. Many migrants we spoke to talk of how they were intercepted by the FRONTEX patrol team and escorted by helicopters, and how boats were called in to tow their pirogues back to land.

As part of the deal to placate the migrants and stop them from using the sea route, the Spanish Government pledged 700 visas to provide contracts for fishers. The visas will be issued at a lottery draw, *loto Espagne*. The Ministry of Youth and the national agency of youth employment were to be in charge of this visa project,

together with the Ministry of Interior that signed the agreement. Since Guet Ndar was one of the hardest hit spots of migration, the *loto Espagne* campaign started there. The then Interior Minister, Ousmane Ngom, personally took the campaign there and draws were made in September 2007 and five fishers won the first draws. But as at October 2008, when my fieldwork was conducted, none of the five candidates has been issued a visa to travel. Although this gave some the opportunity to travel to Spain legally, the programme was not welcomed by all fishers, who think that the Senegalese government should build factories and cold stores to create employment and storage for excess fish catch during the high season. According to them, contracts offered in Spain would help Spain and not Senegal.

### ***France/Senegal***

The French advocated the “selective immigration” put forth by Nicolas Sarkozy, then French Interior Minister. As Patrick Sabatier (2006) remarks: “the new French law voted in June by Parliament envisions selective skill-based immigration and a system of quotas. It cracks down on illegal migrants, restricts family reunion immigration, and requires would-be immigrants to take language and civic lessons.” This policy was criticised by human-rights advocates, immigrant support groups and religious leaders, the policy also infuriates leaders of African states who denounce Sarkozy’s “selective immigration” as a racist “neo-colonial” policy. It is, they hold, an attempt by rich countries at shopping for brains and hands to sustain their own prosperity, while building walls to keep out the huddled masses whose remittances are a major source of income for their native countries. Despite the hue and cry, this policy has been adopted by the EU, which has gone further to state that immigrants must pass the biometric test before admission into the EU. Little wonder that the mass legalization of illegals by Spain and Italy in 2005 and 2006 caused an outcry in the neighbouring countries, where a number of these immigrants end up.

### ***Senegal’s policies***

When boat migration rose to an unprecedented level, the President asked the then Minister of Agriculture, Farba Senghor, to come up with an agricultural plan that would create jobs and engage youths

in farming, and develop a project into which the returnees can be absorbed. The Minister designed the REVA Plan, which the Government presented to the Spanish Government as a programme that would benefit the migrants if the Spanish Government supported it. The plan was supported and huge sums of money were allocated to it, as seen above.

Despite the disbursement of the development aid, more migrants continue to arrive in the Canary Islands. This prompted further agreements that saw Senegal bowing to pressure from Spain to use high-handed measures to crack down on migration. The corollary was that migration was criminalised, with harsher and longer prison sentences meted out to conveyors and seafarers. Needless to say, this policy did not produce the intended results, but rather led to migrants migrating further north to Mauritania to leave from there. This confirms Castles' arguments that in order for policies to work, it is necessary to analyse the migratory process as a long-term social process with its own inherent dynamics (2007).

However, the Government, through the Minister of Interior, reiterated its plan of action:

*"A plan of action was adopted to encourage the return of emigrants and facilitate their integration into the economic fabric. It was therefore decided to grant them tax benefits for the importation of equipment to create businesses, and to develop projects and establish a fund for the creation of businesses and many other measures to reduce constraints." (Le Soleil of Wednesday, 7 June 2006).<sup>21</sup>*

Reaffirming this, the President personally appealed to a group of about 500 repatriated migrants gathered at the presidential palace to help him construct their country:

*"Help me to construct our country. It is difficult, but we need to remedy the situation. I urge you to help. We should construct our country. Nobody will come and do it for us. Those you go to see have constructed their country. We should also do the same. Anyone telling you otherwise is deceiving you." (Les Cahiers de l'Alternance, 2007, No. 11: 88).<sup>22</sup>*

The call by the President seems to fall on deaf ears as the gulf between the migrants and the government is huge. The situation is compounded by allegations of mismanagement of the funds from



Spain to help resettle returnees, as seen from the following remark by a returnee:

*“Fishermen were not involved in the GOANA and selective immigration – Loto Espagne. The Government got diplomatic passports and contracts for youths to travel to Spain and Europe. But this did not affect the Guet Ndariens. “The Spanish told us that they had given our Government 13 billion for youth employment projects. Since our return, we have not seen anything. The Government has not complied with the agreements. Each year, people take to clandestine immigration because of no employment here.”<sup>23</sup>*

Asked what has been done to help him settle after he was repatriated, his response was:

*“When I returned, I was welcomed with a sandwich, a small bottle of drink and 10,000 francs [15.38 euros] for transport back home. From Saint Louis to Kayar, I paid 6,000 francs, others paid 7,000 francs. I gave the remaining 3,000 francs to my wife who spent them in a shop.” (Kayar, 29/10/08).<sup>24</sup>*

The Government, it would appear, is unwilling to develop projects that would help the migrants, such as the REVA Plan which, it was hoped, would reduce migration significantly. During the campaigns for his re-election in 2006, at the height of boat migration, the President took his campaign caravan to Kayar. Here he came face to face with a crowd of angry returnees who blamed him for bringing them back to suffer; they booed and jeered at him for embezzling funds from the Spanish Government meant for them. Unable to carry out his campaign, he returned to Dakar and a few days later he dispatched a Minister – Farba Senghor – with 2 pirogues of 22 metre long, 2 engines of 40 horse power and two nets, meant for about 500 repatriated migrants. A cooler truck was also given to the women who smoke and sell fish to neighbouring villages (*femmes transformatrices*). The gifts, according to my informant from the Department of Fisheries, were not part of the REVA Plan, but were meant to solve a problem as perceived. This gift might have solved the problem if there was enough to go round all the migrants. But due to the large number of migrants involved, it was decided to sell all the equipment and share the proceeds. According to one

of the migrants, it would have been difficult to manage such funds given the number of persons involved, hence selling the equipment and sharing the proceeds was in the best interest of the group. But he goes further to blame the Government for such a decision to provide equipment: "they take decisions without involving those concerned ; they initiate projects without reflection and do not understand the situation."<sup>25</sup> His comments emphasise the top-down manner in which foreign governments and the Senegalese government have treated boat migration.

### **Role of nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations**

While the military surveillance continued, NGOs and other migrants' humanitarian groups criticised this means of stemming the flow of migrants and called for a more humane way of dealing with the 'problem'. They blamed the stringent measures on the increased number of deaths, for migrants had to seek alternative, longer and riskier routes. They called for raising awareness amongst the migrants, increased education and opportunities, social justice and an end to dictatorship. The proposed solutions by the NGOs, for example, suggest a long-term solution to the migration process as opposed to the immediate solutions aimed at repatriating the migrants by the receiving countries.

Most humanitarian groups and NGOs help migrants by providing counselling and social services, as well as assist migrants who voluntarily want to return. The role of NGOs and intergovernmental organizations like the International Organisation for Migration and activist groups cannot be overstated, as they are a structural complement to migrants' networks (Massey *et al.*, 1998: 56-57). Most migrants hail the humanitarian treatment that was given to them by the Red Cross upon arrival, and would rather have stayed at the detention camps than come back to Senegal. To them, life in the camps was much better.

Apart from the NGOs, the reception of the earlier set of migrants by the Spanish authorities encouraged others to follow suit. According to Thiane, who voluntarily returned home due to ill health, the way they were treated by the Spanish Government contributes to the high influx of migrants. When he was released

from the camp, he chose to go to Valencia; his flight was paid for by the State and he was lodged in a hotel, also paid for by the State, for a week before he moved into the accommodation offered by the Association of Senegalese Migrants. Seconding Thiane's assertion, Badara says:

*"They (the Spanish) are kind. They could mine the seas; if people explode, nobody will leave again, but they need us. They told us themselves. The farms need people who work hard. European children prefer football and the old can no longer have children. They told us: 'You Senegalese you are serious and we need you'. You can work without any problem. It is the government that creates problems. France has many immigrants, Italy also has many, but Spain and Portugal do not have enough. France has developed with the help of immigrants, and it does not want other countries to develop like them. The Spanish told me so."*<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps, if migrants had been repatriated at the onset, migration may not have taken the dimension that it did. The largesse offered by the Spanish Government incited the others to follow suit. The information from successful migrants to friends back home about their reception was another motivating fact.

## Conclusion

We have seen how globalisation is challenging the authority of national governments from above and below. The migrants have resorted to challenging the one-sided flow of people which is contrary to the requirements of globalisation that call for reciprocal movements. This has led to what Rosenau (1997) describes as "blurred formerly distinctive spheres of authority and decision-making". The ramification of this is the form of global governance that we are witnessing today, with Western governments – Spain and France in particular – signing bilateral memoranda of understanding on how to deal with the 'problem'.

Despite these concerted form of governance, most of what they offer as solutions appear to be a quick fix. What is more, the voices of the migrants for whom the solutions are intended have been side-stepped. As one conveyor said, for any solution to have a lasting effect, the Spanish and Senegalese governments need to involve the migrants, especially Guet Ndariens (fishers), in looking for lasting solutions, given that they are directly concerned with migration.

He went on to say that as long as this was not done, they would always accept offers from conveyors to ferry boats to Spain. The international community, driven by fear of ‘disease and crime’, believes the only solution is to repatriate the migrants. But as seen from the migrants’ viewpoint, this is far from being a solution, as some of them made up to four trips to Spain, but met with repatriation.

Spain and France, two of the main receiving countries, are out to protect their interests in light of the policies they have adopted – sending back the migrants. Also, the agreements with Senegal are much in favour of Spain and France, with the latter suggesting selective immigration rather than jointly seeking a solution. The gap between global governance and national immigration policy is wide, and is contrary to global governance policies. Very often, policies are guided by short-term solutions determined by the length of electoral periods.

Meanwhile, the Senegalese Government sees this as an opportunity to profit from the plight of the migrants by coming up with another quick-fix solution, and getting huge sums of money that never arrive their destination. Rather, a few persons have benefited from the migration-related largesse. This, we may argue, shows how much Senegal is still a patrimonial state where decisions taken are never implemented and those concerned never consulted. Although the President convened a meeting with returnees, as we have just seen, it was less to seek solutions jointly than to urge them to stay. The visit to Saint Louis by the Minister, Ousmane Ngom, was one of promises and false hopes, for the visas granted to the fishers were of no use as none of them ever travelled to Spain. The visas, like the development aid package that was meant to go to the migrants, were diverted. As referred to by the migrants, the ‘*magouille Sénégalaise*’ machinery was at work and those who could afford to pay for the visas bought their way to Spain.

The much-heralded REVA Plan that would boost agriculture and create employment for the migrants, for instance, served more to swell the bank accounts of individuals. Boat migration came in handy, as the migrants put it, for the government to come up with one of its many plans. As we have seen, the GOANA Plan came on the heels of the REVA Plan – all geared towards agriculture, with no plan for the fisheries sector or its involvement. Yet, as pointed out by the fishers, this sector is also part of agriculture.

It should also be recalled that the sending countries sign the agreement much less on their own terms than the terms of the receiving countries and largely because of the amount of money they stand to receive. Senegal, for example, as mentioned above, got a total of 35 million euros from both the Spanish and the French governments and surveillance equipment for the marine services to monitor the sea. In all of these negotiations, the migrants were not consulted, nor did they take part in the negotiations. This echoes what the migrants/fishers maintain: that they are marginalised and not involved in any of the plans. At home, they have been side-stepped by their Government, and have no say in policies concerning them.

## Notes

1. « La pêche est le premier secteur d'exportation du Sénégal avec 30% des recettes d'exportation. Avec un chiffre d'affaires global de 278 milliards de F CFA, le secteur contribue pour 2,3% au PIB national et 11% au secteur primaire. »
2. « Le Sénégal est le seul pays de la sous-région, de la Mauritanie à l'Angola, où l'accès à la mer est libre et gratuit. On ne se lève pas un beau jour pour s'offrir à cette activité. Parfois, des gens qui ne savent même pas nager deviennent pêcheurs. L'insaturation du permis de pêche est le résultat d'une large concertation qui a vu la participation de tous les acteurs du milieu. »
3. « Le gouvernement ne nous aide plus à rien, nous les pêcheurs de Guet Ndar si le gouvernement nous aidait, les choses seraient beaucoup moins difficiles. Mais ce n'est pas le cas. Ceci est dû aux gouvernants qui prennent de mauvaises décisions. Au Sénégal on ne protège rien, on laisse les bateaux détruire. »
4. « L'état injecte 12 milliards dans la pêche. »
5. « On a peur du gouvernement. Ils sont plus instruits que nous en français. Ils peuvent te dribbler et manger ton argent. C'est ce qui nous arrive maintenant. Avant de nous accorder le plus petit prêt, ils nous demandent nos papiers de maison. S'ils nous prêtent 15 millions on pourra acheter une pirogue avec les 10 millions. Tu le donnes comme une avance en achetant une pirogue. A la fin du mois tu ne peux pas compléter le prix de la pirogue, tu ne plus travailler. Les prêts sont

- courts. Au lieu d'alléger cela sur 8 mois, ils obligent les gens à le payer sur 4 mois. Quand le prêt est remboursé, ils demandent 400.000 francs supplémentaires pour frais de dommage. »
6. « La pêche a besoin d'une nouvelle stratégie de gouvernance et de gestion axée sur la transparence, la participation et l'adoption aux réalités et aux besoins de l'état et des professionnels. »
  7. « Les fameux accords Français ont causé tant de préjudices. L'Union Européenne veut acheter des poissons en Afrique et les revend sur son espace. La France est plus poissonneuse que le Sénégal. Ce qui n'était pas le cas, il n'y pas longtemps donc ils viennent voler nos ressources. Ils ont fait des accords gouvernementaux. Ils ont donné de l'argent en échange pour un accès de leurs pêcheurs à nos côtes. »
  8. « Il n'y a pas les poissons parce que le gouvernement de Abdou Diouf avait donné les licences de pêche au Chinois et les Koreens, les bateaux industriel ont ramassé tous les poissons qu'on avait ici au Senegal. »
  9. « Le secteur de la pêche qui jadis employait beaucoup de monde, des milliers de familles est en déperissement. Le gouvernement Sénégalais a octroyé des licences de pêche à des bateaux cargos appartenant tous aux pays développés. Ils viennent tamiser nos mers, compromettant ainsi l'avenir et la survie de tout un monde. »
  10. « Beaucoup de ces unités industrielle, Sénégalaises et étrangères, pratiquent un chalutage devastateur. Les chalutiers nationaux, qui peuvent opérer aussi dans la zone compromise entre 6 et 12 miles, non seulement épuisent les fonds, mais détruisent les filets dormants, au grand dam des Guet Ndariens. Depuis 1980, les incidents sont de plus en plus fréquents entre eux et les armateurs. Par ailleurs, au-delà des 12 miles, certaines unités étrangères qui n'ont aucun accord avec le Sénégal n'hésitent pas à pénétrer, à partir du domaine maritime mauritanien, dans la zone Sénégalaise contiguë. Diverse forme de piraterie et de pillage seraient ainsi à l'origine de l'effondrement de la production guet ndarienne de pêche depuis la fin des années 1970. »
  11. « C'est eux les bateaux Sénégalais qui ne respect pas les zones de pêche ni les zones de reproduction. Tous les bateaux qui étaient sur nos radar en 1982-1988, tous ont Sénégalisé parce qu'ils ne veulent pas payer le tout de redevance, de payer moins cher et pour pêcheur non loin de la côte et aussi pour éviter d'embarquer un agent des observateurs à bord. »
  12. « Il y a trop de magouille et on ne peut rien faire à notre niveau. »

13. « Il y a des groupes, des collectifs qui se sont constitués. Ils parlent de problèmes individuels au lieu d'insister sur l'intérêt global, collectif. Si tu as une plaie à la jambe et tu guéris la tête, tu ne guériras pas. Les dirigeants des collectifs sont puissants mais les pêcheurs n'ont rien. J'ai une carte de membre. A Dakar j'ai fait des démarches à la mairie, à la gouvernance, j'ai assisté à des séminaires mais rien. »
14. « Ils sont nés pêcheurs artisanal, grandis dans la pêche artisanal et mourrirons dans la pêche artisanal, c'est leur method de vie et leur façon. Leur philosophie ne leur permet pas de vivre mieux. Ils voient rien que le profit. »
15. « On a entendu que le Gouvernement veut réaliser la Goana. Je croyais que la Goana concernait les pêcheurs aussi mais jusqu'à présent on n'a en des informations sur la Goana. Le gouvernement ne nous a pas associé à la Goana. Si la Goana sert à nourrir les populations, les premiers à contribuer ce sont les pêcheurs. Ils ont parlé de Goana, ils n'ont pas touché la pêche. Le gouvernement ne nous a pas associé à la Goana. C'est ce qui nous a fait mal. Les pêcheurs sont très fatigués et notre gouvernement ne nous aide en rien. Le gouvernement oublie qu'il y a des pêcheurs dans le pays. La pêche est un secteur prioritaire qui fait entrer beaucoup devises, plus que l'agriculture ou tel autre secteur. Mais le gouvernement favorise les cultivateurs et nous sommes laissés en rade. On n'est pas impliqué dans la prise de parole. On est marginalise. »
16. « nous sommes les condamnés. »
17. « Le plan Goana ne touche pas directement à la pêche malgré que hier le Ministre était là, on en a parlé. La Goana limité à l'agriculture n'a pas trop de sens. Pour s'autosuffisance la population a besoin de toucher à la source de protéines. Et la source de protéines c'est la pêche. La pêche et l'agriculture devraient avoir un seul Ministère si non un Ministère avec un Secrétaire d'Etat. A Kayar il y a ces deux activités et beaucoup de pêcheurs se dérobent pour filer vers l'agriculture. Certains pratiquent les deux et doivent être encouragés. Ceci permettrait d'économiser les réserves. Pendant certain période on doit imposer le repos biologique aux gens. Si on imposait le repos biologique pendant deux mois, les gens se retourne aux champs pour les activités champêtres. L'activité de la Goana devrait faire bénéficier le pêcheur et l'agriculture. Elle est financée pour atteindre l'autosuffisance alimentaire. Donc ce pays ne peut pas s'occuper de l'agriculture seulement. On a aussi besoin de la protéine qui provient de la mer et de l'élevage. L'agriculture a le même statut que l'élevage et la pêche. »

18. « Je suis parti en Espagne parce que depuis 10 ans la pêche n'avance pas et parce que tout le temps on augmente le prix de matériel. Le moment où le clandestin est venu, le gouvernement ne nous assiste pas. Le gouvernement ne se soucie même pas qu'il y a des pêcheurs ici. Les cultivateurs sont assistés, mais on a rien fait pour nous. »
19. « Entre 2000 et au jour on a eu cinq plans qui sont echoués. Le plan Quinquenal de l'agriculture est lancé en 2001 sur cinq ans qui a echoué. Du plan Quinquenal il a passé au plan jaaxyha en 2004. Tout le monde était inclu, les jeunes, les armées et les interlectuels étaient impliqués. Mais rien n'a marché, lorsque les jeunes sont découragés et ont commencé à prendre les pirogues pour l'Espagne, il est parti en Espagne, il a trouvé un protocole avec le gouvernement Espagnol en lui disant que moi j'ai un plan, le plan REVA – Retours Vers l'Agriculture. Si vous me donnez de l'argent, je vais ramener tout les Sénégalais et les faire travailler. Ainsi est né le plan REVA car l'Espagne a financé ce projet. Le plan REVA a echoué. Il a passé du plan REVA à Structure de Croissance Accélérée pour le Sénégal. Ça n'a pas marché, et aujourd'hui en 2008, il a encore lancé le plan GOANA. Espérons que ça va réussir, on souhaite que ça réussit. »
20. « Ils ont vidé nos mers, et font que la pêche n'est plus rentable. Et maintenant ils ne veulent pas de nous. »
21. « Un plan d'action avait été adopté pour encourager le retour des émigrés et faciliter leur insertion dans le tissu économique. C'est ainsi qu'il a été décidé pour ces derniers, des avantages fiscaux pour l'importation de matériels destinés à la création d'entreprises; la mise en place d'une banque de projets, d'un fonds pour création d'entreprises et de nombreuses autres mesures pour adoucir les contraintes. »
22. « Aidez-moi à construire notre pays. C'est difficile, mais nous devons redresser la situation. C'est à cela que je vous invite. Nous devons construire notre pays. Personne ne viendra le faire à notre place. Ceux que vous êtes allés voir ont construit leur pays. Nous aussi, nous devons faire de même. Celui qui vous dit autre chose, votre trompe. »
23. « Les pêcheurs n'étaient pas associés à la Goana ni à l'immigration choisie - loto Espagne. Le gouvernement a trouvé des passeports diplomatiques et des contrats qui ont permis à des jeunes de voyager en Espagne et en Europe. Mais cela n'a pas concerné les Guet Ndariens.  
  
« Les Espagnols nous ont fait savoir qu'ils ont donné 13 milliards à notre gouvernement pour des projets d'emploi pour les jeunes. Depuis



notre retour, on n'a rien vu. Le gouvernement n'a pas respecté les accords. Chaque année, des gens se rendent à l'immigration clandestine, parce qu'il n'y a pas de travail ici. »

24. « Au retour ils m'ont accueillis avec un sandwich, une petite bouteille de boisson et 10.000 [•15.38] pour le transport retour à la maison. De Saint-Louis à Kayar, j'ai payé 6000 francs, d'autres ont payé 7000 Francs. Les 3000 Francs restant je les ai remis à ma femme qui les a dépensé à la boutique. »
25. « Ils prennent les décisions, mais ils ne prennent pas à la source, ils ont les projets sans imaginer et ils ne comprennent comment ça se passe. »
26. « Ils (les Espagnols) sont gentils, ils ont de bons cœurs. Ils pouvaient miner les mers, si les gens explosent, personne ne partira plus jamais, mais ils ont besoin de nous. Ils nous l'ont proprement dit. Ils nous l'ont fait savoir. Les champs ont besoin de braves gens pour y travailler. Les enfants Européens préfèrent le football, les vieillards ne font plus d'enfants. Ils nous l'ont dit « vous les Sénégalais, vous êtes sérieux et on a besoin de vous. Tu travailles sans entraves. C'est au niveau du gouvernement que les problèmes se posent. La France a beaucoup d'immigrés, l'Italie en a beaucoup également mais l'Espagne et le Portugal n'en n'ont pas assez. La France s'est développée grâce aux immigrés, et elle ne veut pas que les autres pays avancent comme elle. Les Espagnols me l'ont dit. »



Although boat migration has many followers, the fishers, as we have seen, make up the bulk of the migrants. Migration is undertaken against a backdrop of inefficient policies implemented by the Senegalese government, which has devoted more effort to agriculture than to fisheries. Furthermore, there are no real policies regulating the fishery sector in Senegal, and Senegal's waters are open to all, as noted by the Minister of Fisheries. This trend has not abated.

The financial development aid provided by the receiving countries, intended to settle repatriated migrants, is not appropriately used. The REVA Plan, which was intended to help resettle repatriated migrants, was not successful, given that the allocated funds were diverted. Besides, those for whom all the intervention is being carried out are not consulted on what could be done to improve on their situation and curb migration. The fishers seem to be marginalised at all levels by the State, priority is given to agriculture over fishing, funds meant to resettle returnees are diverted, and the fisheries policies have not helped to safeguard a better livelihood for them. With fishermen feeling marginalised and not getting much out from the sea, boat migration was seen by many as a panacea for improved standard of living.

Perhaps what seems to have caused migration to flare up is the way the receiving countries have dealt with it. By and large, migration has been seen as a problem, and migrants treated more often as criminals and placed in detention camps pending repatriation. This is seen from the description of migration, which exhibits a lot of bias, as it is popularly referred to in analogy with environmental and natural disaster – flood, currents, waves – and criminal justice systems that place migrants on a par with criminals. Furthermore, the receiving countries tend to co-opt sending countries into their line of action, and decisions tend to be immediate without consideration for a long-term solution, as the receiving countries appear to consider that it is incumbent upon sending countries to provide a solution, which means that receiving countries have to comply with their approach to the problem.

Boat migration, as we have seen, arises from the existence of borders and from the fact that border crossing is possible only under certain defined legal conditions, which the migrants do not meet. The abilities of the State to control emigration are limited (especially the sending countries), and migration policies most often do not succeed in achieving their intended objectives. This is because there is an interaction process, with the action of one actor provoking a reaction from the other, which in turn leads to another reaction – boat migration. The changing of routes by the migrants shows just how their action is influenced by the anticipation of possible reactions of the states that they pass through and of the receiving countries. The result is the changing of routes from the trans-Sahara to the trans-Atlantic, and finally migrants moving from Senegal to Mauritania, where they feel control is less severe, to migrate. In the process, they are looking for safer margins, as they are out to defy and resist the authority of the States at local and international levels. Moreover, they see the State as a constraint on their aspirations and ambitions which should be resisted by all means.

Migration is also based on long-standing cultural values of the people, where it is largely perceived as a mark of social standing. People have learnt to migrate, and migration has become an accepted social and cultural value. The active involvement of the fishers also upholds this notion of migration as a cultural value, for age-old migration for fishing is part of their culture, and is seen as a mark of maturity. Historically, socially, and economically, migration has come to be seen as part and parcel of the cultural repertoire of the Senegalese. Migrants' remittances help to sustain social and economic life. Their involvement in boat migration is also as a result of the catalogue of difficulties that beset this sector, ranging from dwindling resources to exorbitant cost of fishing equipment. Fishers feel their livelihood is endangered, and boat migration represented much-needed relief in their eyes. For some, it was short-lived as they were repatriated; for others, their dream of a better life was realised as they were allowed into Spain. The mass departure of the fishers, as we have also seen, has not been helpful to the fisheries sector, as it has drained the sector of its most skilled fishers, since they were the first to migrate. This has forced some retired fishers to come back to the trade, because their able sons have migrated and remittances are not as regular as was expected.

In recent years, boat migration from sub-Saharan Africa, and especially from Senegal to the Canary Islands, has received extensive attention from the media, which considers this mass migration is as a result of poverty. But as we have seen, analyses focusing on 'African misery' pushing migrants out of the continent tend to obscure migrants' agency and the vital demand side of this migration. The relative high costs of migration partly explain why migrants do not generally belong to the poorest groups in origin countries. Rather than fleeing poverty, migrants tend to move because of a general lack of prospects for self-fulfilment in their origin countries and the concomitant inability to meet their personal aspirations. But as I have shown, migration should rather be seen as a dynamic and social process that needs an all-inclusive study, given that the link between migration and poverty is complex, as it is negotiated through layers of need, networks and choices, and these networks and choices operate in varied cultural settings. This does not completely rule out the fact that migration is partly due to poverty, but poverty alone does not explain this phenomenon as we need to consider the social, economic and cultural factors in order to better understand it. And, as earlier mentioned, migration thus becomes a strategy by which families try to improve their chances of better living conditions.

Increasingly, a new, deep belief in religion has taken hold on migration, with migrants believing in the supernatural powers of the *marabout* to ensure a safe journey for them. Throughout this thesis, we have seen the pivotal role that religion plays in the migration process. This is as a result of the integration of religion into the various aspects of the culture of migration, making it a real migration culture. First and foremost, religion has been an integral part of the community's way of life, but boat migration has helped to intensify reliance on *marabouts*, with their mystical powers and prayers bringing them to the epicentre of boat migration, as I have shown.

Through the stories narrated by the migrants, we have also come to see the other facet of '*maraboutage*', wherein family members do all within their power, with the help of *marabouts*, to bring back relatives from other countries, and stop them from migrating. Meanwhile, families left behind continuously seek the intervention

of the *marabout* for their children and relatives to improve their situation. This brings us to the conclusion that migration has not been a panacea for improved livelihood, despite claims to the contrary. The much-expected gains from migration have not been realised by all, as some were repatriated while others have not been able to find jobs or regularise their status. Migration created heroes in some and villains in others, and made them the ridicule of their peers. For others, it has left indelible scars as they have lost loved ones.

The desire to migrate is encouraged by the culture of migration and migrants' perception of successful migrants, as well as the long-standing ideologies and beliefs about Europe. Migration, as mentioned earlier, is a learned social behaviour and the would-be migrants learn to migrate from seeing how migrant members of their families and friends are treated with great respect and are the centre of attention when they are on holiday. The glamour craved mothers seeking to marry their daughters to migrants only helps to give migration grandeur and excitement for those yet to migrate.

The attitude of successful migrants and the impression they give of Europe further help to incite prospective migrants and their families, causing rivalry in families. This rivalry is highly visible among wives, who tend to challenge their unsuccessful sons and compare them to those of their co-wives who have succeeded. This family rivalry is also a motivating factor to those left behind, as we have seen.

Although most people would like to migrate, there are still those who strongly feel that going to Spain does not necessarily mean that success is imminent. One of my informants also thinks that with more seriousness and hard work, the fishers could succeed.

As the migrants feed themselves with all the perceptions and ideologies, the next move is to look for means of achieving their dreams. This leads them to start making contacts with friends and family abroad, who could act as an entry point into a useful network for them. The roles of kinship ties and friendship have undoubtedly been the most commonly tapped network resources which, as we have seen, have been labelled "network-mediated migration" that facilitate rather than encapsulate. Networks are a prerequisite for boat migration. It is not individuals, but households, that mobilise resources and support, and make decisions about who migrates in

the family. Social networks and households simultaneously mediate the macro structural changes, facilitate the migration response to these changes, and perpetuate migration as a self-sustaining social process.

### **Recommendation**

This research has been an aspect within a whole because the research was carried out only in Senegal, and information was gathered from returnees and families of successful migrants. For a more balance study, a transnational study that would include Mauritania and Spain would be recommended as it would follow the migrants' new itinerary and also find out about the perceptions of successful migrants of Europe. Given the chance, would the successful migrants like to return to Senegal?





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The world is regularly confronted on television and in other mass media with dramatic images of African boat migrants. Seemingly desperate, these Africans, most of them males, are willing to risk a perilous journey at sea, hoping for a better life in Europe. And, even worse, hundreds more are believed to die each year, swallowed up anonymously by the choppy waters off Africa's coast. This book focuses on fishermen who have played a pivotal role in boat migration from Senegal to Spain's Canary Islands, advancing various reasons for the fishermen's prominent role. Besides their long history of migration, their proven experience with navigating, their family's push and investment, their perceptions and ideologies about Europe, there is also their growing marginalization as a result of the deepening crisis in the Senegalese fishing sector and the inadequate policies of the Senegalese government that prevents them from having any bright prospects of improving their standards of living. The book provides deep insights into the meaning of boat migration, and on the effects of success or failure on the migrants and their families. It goes beyond the usual economic explanations to convincingly situate boat migration within the long-standing West African culture of migration, and highlight the significance of socio-cultural and political factors. Among the fascinating findings are the perception of migration as status enhancing and a rite de passage in the Senegalese fishing communities, and the profound roles of the extended family, social networks and, above all, religion, especially the widespread influence of the marabout. The importance of information and communication technologies in sustaining transnational networks is equally highlighted.

*"After reading this book one will never again think about boat migration as a simple question of poverty and lost youths searching for greener pastures. Henrietta Nyamnjoh shows how for the fishermen of the Senegalese coast, boat sea voyages and the risks involved are simply part and parcel of living a culture of migration. This study convinces the reader that hidden behind the governance of borders and migration, are human stories that show the controversies and inequalities of our world."*

**- Professor Mirjam de Bruijn, African Studies Centre, Leiden**

*"Henrietta Nyamnjoh must be highly commended for her initiative and courage to tackle in-depth research into the hazardous and largely unpredictable reality of boat migration, with a view to erasing existing misconceptions, false and partial explanations, and to enhancing our understanding. This is an original and innovative piece of work – well-written and well-argued. It certainly deserves a wide readership even beyond the normal academic and policy-making circles."*

**- Dr Piet Konings, African Studies Centre, Leiden**

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